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S E R M O N S

OF THE LATE

Reverend JOHN ORR, D.D.

ARCHDEACON of FERNS.

Prepared for the Press by the AUTHOR.

V O L. III.



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MDCCLXXII.



To the Right Reverend EDWARD,
Lord Bishop of FERNS.

AS a Testimony of Gratitude for Favours
received, this VOLUME OF SERMONS of
his deceased Father, is, with all Respect,
inscribed by his Lordship's

Most dutiful,

Most grateful, and

Most obedient Servant,

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Sake.*

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the Beatitudes.

P S A L M IV. 6.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us
any Good? Lord, lift thou up the
Light of thy Countenance upon us.*

IN these Words, the Psalmist first ex-
presseth the common Disposition and
Desire of Men, with respect to Happi-
ness; that they are eagerly pursuing,
and panting after it, though the greatest
Part of them, indeed, mistake the right
Road, which leadeth to it: *There be
many that say, who will shew us any*
Vol. III. B Good?

SERM.

I.



SERM. *Good*; Secondly, he describeth the sure
 I. Way, in which he, and all other wise
 and good Men endeavour to obtain it,
 by seeking it in the Favour of God, ex-
 pressed here by *the light of his Counte-
 nance being lifted up upon them*, and con-
 sequently by the Practice of all those
 Virtues, which are necessary to entitle
 them to his Favour.

I. As for the first Thing suggested
 by the Psalmist, that Mankind are na-
 turally pursuing, and panting after Hap-
 piness: This is so plain a Point, that it
 wanteth no Proof. It is a Thing uni-
 versally perceived and felt by Men.
 There are none, who do not form some
 Notions of a Happiness, that suiteth
 themselves; and who, in consequence
 of this, are not solicitous to obtain the
 Object; from which, in their Opinion,
 that Happiness ariseth. These are
 Points, in which Persons of all Situa-
 tions and Characters, the Young, and
 the Old; the Rich, and the Poor; the
 Wise, and the Foolish; the Learned,
 and the Ignorant; the Good, and the
 Bad, agree. Nor would it be any dif-
 ficult Matter to them, if they were but
 attentive,

attentive, and seriously disposed, to find out wherein their true Happiness consists. Every one must easily understand, that Happiness in general, ariseth from the Gratification of our natural Powers of Perception; and that as we are endowed with a great Variety of such Powers, some of an higher Rank and Dignity, and others of a lower Estimation in our Constitution, when these several Powers are all gratified, in a due Order and Proportion, with the Objects, which are naturally suited and adapted to them, so far as the Gratification of them all, is possible and consistent, we are then in the happiest State that can be. It is certain, that none even of our smallest Enjoyments, are to be despised, or quite overlooked by us: they may be all very innocently, and even commendably desired, and are to be thankfully received, as Instances, or Effects of the Divine Bounty, for rendering our present State more supportable and comfortable to us. The Business is for us, not to relish any of the inferior Pleasures, and good Things of this World, too much; nor to pursue them, with

SERM. an Ardour, quite exceeding their real
 I. Value; but to keep our Desires of
 them, always in a perfect Subordination
 to the Desires of Virtue, or of moral
 Excellence; and to the Gratifications
 of the sublimer Powers in our Consti-
 tution; which yield us a Pleasure, in-
 finitely superior to all other Sorts of Sa-
 tisfaction, and which alone, of all our
 Pleasures, hath something substantial,
 solid, and abiding in it.

But however natural the Desire of
 Happiness is to Mankind, and however
 easily, upon due Consideration and At-
 tention, they might obtain a true
 Knowledge of its Nature, it is plain,
 in Fact, that they very generally mis-
 take its Nature, and entertain very
 wrong Notions of it, and endeavour to
 arrive at it, in Ways, which can never
 bring them to the Possession or Enjoy-
 ment of it. From the unavoidable
 Condition of human Nature, we are in
 our early Years, familiarized to, and
 engrossed by the Objects of the exter-
 nal Senses, giving Attention to nothing
 else, and experiencing little, or no other
 Pleasure, than the Gratifications which
 these

these Objects afford. The Age for Reflection succeedeth; but before this fully arriveth, the greatest part of Men are prepossessed in Favour of outward Enjoyments, and contract such a liking of them, and are so wholly immersed in them, or so much employed about them, that they are but very little solicitous about any Thing further; and have, perhaps, no Notion of a higher, or greater Happiness. They must probably indeed, sometimes experience a little of the Pleasures of Virtue, from those honest and generous Actions, which the pure Impulses of their Consciences, and the Bias of their natural Propensions, may, on some Occasions, prompt and lead them to, in the Midst of all their Corruptions: But these Pleasures are so little regarded and valued by them, that they make no Part of that Scheme, or System, which they form of their own highest Good, which consisteth in Enjoyments, derived from very different Sources, some of the lower Appetites and Passions of our Nature misguided and corrupted, and carried to an extravagant Height; or from

SERM. what St. *John* calleth *the Lusts of the*
 I. *Flesh, the Lusts of the Eye, and the*
Pride of Life; meaning by *the Lusts of*
the Flesh excessive and irregular Desires
 of sensual Pleasure; and by *the Lusts of the*
Eye, immoderate Desires of Riches, and
 the Magnificence of the World; and by
the Pride of Life, too vehement a Fond-
 ness for Respect, Distinction, Rank,
 and Power; a claiming and arrogating
 to ourselves, an undue Share of Honour
 and Superiority, and the treating our
 Neighbours, who are perhaps full as
 worthy as we are, with Insolence, Neg-
 lect, and Contempt. From these pol-
 luted Fountains, the Men, in whom
 sensual and worldly Principles prevail
 and govern, endeavour to derive Hap-
 piness, a Thing in its own Nature,
 quite pure and untainted; but what-
 ever Satisfaction they may receive from
 thence, it can never be deemed to be
 the Happiness peculiar to the human
 Nature, which cannot, possibly, be
 raised upon the Ruins of the noble
 Powers and amiable Affections of that
 Nature, but which, indeed, ariseth
 chiefly from the due Cultivation, and
 lively

lively Exercise of those Powers and Affections : Which doth not at all exclude the Gratifications of our very lowest Powers of Perception and Sensation, which alloweth even these to hold their proper Place in the Scale of our Enjoyments ; but which, when enjoyed most innocently and regularly by us, must still be accounted the smallest Part of what constituteth our true Felicity.

SERM.

I.

But to consider the mistaken Notions and Pursuits of Men, with Respect to their Happiness, a little more particularly.

I. Some place their chief, or their only Happiness, in the Pleasures of Sense, and make the Enjoyment of these, with an exquisite Taste, or Relish, the Object of their most earnest and incessant Pursuit and Care. This is the Idol of Voluptuousness, before which a great Part of the World bow down, and prostrate themselves. But herein they act, not only an immoral and wicked, but a most absurd and foolish Part, in seeking Happiness, where it is never to be found. For however

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I.


the Pleasures of our external Senses in a moderate Degree, and so far as the Principles of Piety and Virtue authorise us to enjoy them, are certainly agreeable, and indeed necessary for our Support, and comfortable Subsistence in the World; yet, if we raise and force our sensual Appetites, or endeavour to please them in a disorderly or licentious Way, the Gratification of them will cease to be agreeable, or it will be attended with a Pain and an Uneasiness, which will far overbalance all the Satisfaction and Pleasure of it. Of the Truth of this, many Men have a most woeful Experience, in that Sottishness and Stupidity, in that Loss both of Understanding and Spirit, in that incurable Baseness and Lowness of Mind, in that Remorse and Anguish of Heart, in those Nauseatings and Diseases, in those Achings and Languishings, and untimely Deaths, which they bring upon themselves by their Riots and Debaucheries. Besides, the Enjoyments of our merely sensitive Powers, in their very best State, must be always estimated by Men of Reflection, at a very low Rate; as they have

have nothing of Dignity or Excellence in them, but become defireable, chiefly from some Reference which they are supposed, as they may be shared and enjoyed in common with others, to have to Society, or to the Purpose of carrying on a decent and generous, a kind and friendly Commerce in Life, without some Imagination of which, they would soon fall into Disesteem even with the Luxurious: And as they are so very short and transient, perishing with the Moment of Enjoyment, leaving no delightful Remembrance, or agreeable Relish behind them, but often, on the Contrary, Satiety and Disgust. So that these Pleasures, when most innocent, and free from all flagrantly bad and destructive Consequences, can by no Means yield a Happiness, adequate to the Capacities and Desires of Enjoyment, with which Mankind are endowed, nor sometimes sufficiently recompence us, for the Pains and Trouble, which we are at, in procuring them.

2. Others endeavour to derive their Happiness from *the Lusts of the Eye*, or from an importunate and inordinate Desire,

SERM. I.  Desire, and an endless Accumulation of Riches, and the Things which are of an high Valuation and Price in the World. But the Labour of these likewise, will prove to be but *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. The Desire of Wealth, is not an original, but a secondary desire of our Nature, which ariseth upon a Perception of its Importance, as the Means of gratifying our primary Desires, or of procuring and securing to us the Objects of them. The great Value of it, plainly consisteth in its Subserviency in promoting Ends, of much greater Moment, than the mere Possession of it is. And as Riches may indeed be eminently instrumental, not only in procuring all innocent Delights to their Possessors, but in carrying on the most noble and generous Designs and Works, to desire and pursue them, with a worthy and honourable Intention, and to lay them out, after they are acquired, in Acts of Piety, Humanity, and Benevolence, is highly laudable; a Thing, which will dignify and exalt our Characters, and yield us a most pure and godlike Pleasure. But if we seek
Riches,

of HAPPINESS.

II

SERM.

I.

Riches, eagerly and solicitously, merely to satisfy our Desires of possessing them, and if, after we have amassed great Treasures, and have *joined House to House, and Field to Field*, we are still for going on, and adding to our Stock, while in the mean Time, we receive *no Good from them, save the beholding them with our Eyes*, or our gazing, with a fond Delight, on our Heaps of shining Metal, and our other goodly and shewy Possessions; or if we have Recourse to our Wealth, for Protection and Security, against the Evils of the World; if any of us *make Gold our Hope, or say to the fine Gold, thou art my Confidence; if we rejoice, merely because our Estate is increased, and our Hand hath gotten much*; our Conduct, surely, must be accounted both corrupt and infamous, and extremely unwise and indiscreet with Respect to our own Interest. For by indulging a Temper of such insatiable Covetousness, we cherish in ourselves, the very Temper of Misery; full of Anxiety, Distraction, and Disquiet; which will make us *to rise early, and to sit up late, and to eat the Bread of Care-*

I

fulness;

SERM. *fulness*; which will give us many wearisome Days, and restless Nights, without serving any one good Purpose by them; which will subject us to perpetual Fears and Misgivings of Mind, lest our Fortunes should be any Way impaired, or diminished; and expose us to the most grievous Chagrin and Discontent, when our Schemes and Projects for greater Wealth and Gain, are broken and disappointed. This must, certainly, be a State of great Unhappiness, even supposing the Persons who are in it, to be chargeable with nothing worse than an excessive and over solicitous Desire of Riches, without violating the Rights, and prejudicing the Interests of our Neighbours; but much more unhappy must they be, if they allow themselves, as the Covetous are too apt to do, to acquire and accumulate Wealth, in the Ways of Dishonesty, Deceit, and Falshood, and to apply their ill-gotten Stores, to the Purposes, either of a private Debauchery, or of a cruel Domination, Tyranny, and Oppression. Then they must most sensibly feel *the fore Evil,*
which

which *Solomon* had frequently *seen under the Sun, Riches kept by the Owners thereof, to their Hurt*; involving them in the greatest Inconveniences and Distresses here, and necessarily exposing them, without a total Alteration of their Temper, and Conduct, to utter Ruin and Misery hereafter.

SERM.

I.

Lastly, As to those, who are for deriving Happiness from the Gratifications of their Pride, or misguided Ambition; from Popularity and the venal Applauses of Men, from Precedence, Rank, and the Ostentation, or Influence of Power, and the like, they will certainly be disappointed in their Aims. True Honour, or the well-founded Esteem of wise and good Men, is undoubtedly a Thing very desirable by the best Minds, and when clearly obtained, must necessarily give them an high Satisfaction. But the Homage and Acclamations of an unthinking giddy Multitude, who are incapable of judging of real Merit, and are captivated only with some outward glaring Appearances; as likewise the Applauses of servile self-interested Persons, who frequently

SERM.

I.

frequent get about Men of Rank and Power, and artfully flatter them, for some private Ends which they have to serve by them, have nothing solid and truly valuable in them, and can never be regarded by Persons of any Reflection and Generosity of Mind. Besides, all Applauses of this Sort, are so fleeting and inconstant, that they can never be depended upon, by Men of any Experience, and Practice in the World; as it is well known, that the Man, who is in the highest Credit and Favour with the Multitude to-day, may be as much the Object of their Execration and Hatred to-morrow, and that a small Alteration in the Views of private Flatterers, may immediately produce a Change of their Disposition, and turn all their Adulation and Fawning, into Reviling and Abuse. And indeed Pride, or an undue Affectation of Distinction and Superiority, is so mean, illiberal, and ungenerous a Quality in itself, argues so little a Mind, and such a great Defect in those Principles and Dispositions, which raise and adorn human Nature, that whenever it is known

known to be the predominant Passion of a Man, it must always defeat its own End; and instead of procuring to the Man a general Esteem and Love, must naturally render him the Object of an universal Dislike and Detestation. As we are told, that, *Every One who is proud in Heart, is an Abomination to the Lord*; so likewise, when he comes to be fully known, he must be odious to all Mankind.

SERM.

I.

And thus we see, that Men, notwithstanding their natural and earnest Desire of Happiness, and their eager and solicitous Pursuit of it, in some Shape or other, very generally mistake both the true Nature of it, and the right Road, which leadeth to it; and that instead of the Substance, they catch only at some vain Phantoms, and empty Appearances of it. Thus *their Way is their Folly*, and if persevered in, must necessarily issue in their final Ruin and Destruction.

II. I shall proceed now to consider the sure Method of attaining to true Happiness pointed out to us by the *Psalmist*, in which, he himself, and all other

SERM. other wise and good Men, endeavoured
 1. to obtain it; by seeking it in the Favour
 ~~~~~ of God, and consequently by the Prac-  
 tice of all the Virtues, which are neces-  
 sary to entitle Men to his Favour.

*There be many that say, who will shew  
 us any Good? But Lord, saith the  
 Psalmist, in his own Name, and in the  
 Names of all prudent and good Men,  
 lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance  
 upon us. As if he had said; " Great  
 " Numbers of Men, or indeed all Men  
 " are sufficiently desirous of their own  
 " Good, and earnestly endeavour, by  
 " some Means, or other, to acquire  
 " it; but the greatest Part of them  
 " are both ignorant of the Nature of  
 " true Happiness, and mistake the  
 " Way which leadeth to it: Do thou,  
 " therefore, O Lord, look with a pleas-  
 " ed and benign Countenance upon us,  
 " who think more wisely and justly in  
 " this Matter, and make us the Objects  
 " of thy Love; in which we shall find a  
 " most plentiful Spring of all Good, and  
 " from whence we shall feel a Joy and  
 " Gladness diffused through our Hearts,  
 " infinitely superior to all the Satisfac-  
 tion*

“ tion, which the Men of this World  
 “ can receive, from the greatest Abun-  
 “ dance of outward Possessions and  
 “ Enjoyments.”

SERM.

I.

And indeed, if we consider what Sort of a Being God is, and the Perfections which necessarily belong to him; that he is an infinite, eternal, ever-living, and active Spirit, possessed of all Power, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, we must conclude, that, as he at first created all Things, and established them in the beautiful Order, in which we see them to be; so he both can, and must govern the World, for the noblest and best Purposes; for the Benefit of his Creatures in general, who are endowed with any Powers of Life and Sensation; particularly for the Good of Mankind, and more especially of that Part of Men, who by a worthy Conduct, endeavour to secure a Title to his Regard and Favour. For *in his Favour is Life*; nay, *his Loving-kindness is better than all the Blessings of Life*; as it not only carrieth all these along with it, which will be always distributed to those, who are the Objects of it, in such Measures and

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I.



Proportions, as will be most conducive to their absolute and greatest Good, though not perhaps in the Manner, which would be most agreeable to the fond and foolish Passions, which are sometimes apt to arise in them; and as over and above these, it will give them a vastly more valuable Happiness, in an habitual Serenity and Peace, and in a firm Confidence and Security of Mind in the worst Circumstances, in which, they can at any Time be in this World; and which, reaching beyond the Limits of this present Life, will provide for all the Worthy and Good, an Happiness infinitely superior to all our present Conceptions and Imaginations, in that other World, for which, from many Indications in the Frame of our Minds, as well as from the clear and certain Discoveries of the Gospel, we are plainly intended. As God condescendeth to be called the God of all his faithful People and Servants *he would be ashamed,* as the Apostle speaketh, *to be called their God,* or to be thought to stand in so high a Relation to them, as that of an almighty, and perfectly wise and gra-

cious Protector and Governor, if he did not effectually take Care of them, and consult their Interest; if he did not confer on them a Happiness here, suited to their State and Circumstances, and if he had not prepared some extraordinary Blessing for them hereafter, worthy of himself to bestow, which will abundantly compensate all the Pains and Losses, which they had sustained in his Service in this World, and which will be fully commensurate to the largest Capacities, Desires, and Wishes of their immortal Souls. Most certainly, the Rewards which God will assign to those, who deserve his Favour in the other World, will be both quite complete and full in its Measure and Degree, and most constant and abiding in its Duration. *For in his Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand, are Pleasures for evermore.* Let us, therefore, gain the Favour of God, and this will be a compendious Way to all Good.

There is a Caution, however, here necessary to be interposed, not to deceive ourselves with any vain Notions of our being entitled to the Favour of God,

SERM. when we are not at all the Objects of it.

I.



It is impossible to procure to ourselves this Favour, merely by our entertaining an high Idea of the infinite Value and Importance of it, or by asking it, in the most earnest and importunate Terms from God: But if we would obtain it, we must endeavour in some Sort to merit it, by the Exercise of all inward good Affections, and the uniform Practice of all Virtue in our outward Conversation. According to any rational Notions, which we can entertain of the Deity, we must believe him to be both a moral Agent, and a moral Governor; that he perfectly knoweth the Excellence and Worth of Virtue, and the Baseness and Ill-desert of Vice; that *he loveth Righteousness, and hateth Iniquity*; and that while *his Countenance with Pleasure beholdeth the Upright, his Face is set against those who do Evil*. Let no Man, therefore, deceive himself; for *of a Truth God is no Respector of Persons, but as in every Nation, he who feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted of him*; so no Man, upon any other Foundation, can become the Object of



his Mercy and Love. In this Doctrine, concerning the Necessity of Virtue, for recommending Men to the Favour of God, and its being the sure Means of their Happiness, the Men of Reflection in all Ages, have agreed with him, *who spake, as never Man spake*; who hath most earnestly and affectionately inculcated upon us, the Practice of moral Piety and Goodness, as the true and stable Ground of our Acceptance with our Creator, Governor, and Judge, and as the only Thing that can make us truly blessed, both now and for ever. This he hath done in all his Discourses, which have any Relation to this Subject, and more especially in the *Beatitudes*, as they are commonly called, or his Declarations concerning the real Happiness of Men, which our Lord, contrary to the common Opinion of the World, but agreeably to the Sentiments of the wisest and best Philosophy, deriveth, not from any outward Possessions and Enjoyments, but from the inward Temper and Constitution of the Soul; from the Possession of all those excellent and divine Qualities and Graces,

SERM. which, at the same Time, that they  
I. dignify and ennoble our Nature, yield  
us the most pure, and satisfying, and  
ever flowing Delight here, accompanied  
with the most joyful hope of an incon-  
ceivably greater Felicity hereafter. And  
as I intend, if it pleaseth God, to give  
you, in some subsequent Discourses, an  
Explanation of these Beatitudes of our  
Saviour, I thought fit to premise this  
Discourse, as a proper Introduction to  
that Explanation: That being cured  
of an undue Admiration of all outward  
Glare and Pomp, and the enticing Plea-  
sures of Sense, and taken off from all  
Pursuits of a false, or mistaken Good,  
we may be prepared and disposed to  
seek our Happiness in the true Source of  
it; in a good State of Mind within  
ourselves and in the consequent Favour  
of God, which will protect and sup-  
port us in this World, and crown us,  
*with Glory, and Honour, and Immortality,*  
*in the next.* To him may all Praise  
and Glory be given, now, and for ever,  
Amen.

DISCOURSES  
ON THE  
BEATITUDES.



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INTRODUCTION.

**B**EFORE I enter on a particular Consideration of the Beatitudes, I shall, for preventing our mistaking our Saviour's Meaning in them, make an Observation concerning them all in General; which is, that though our Lord promiseth a Blessing to every One of the virtuous Qualifications, which he mentioneth in them, yet this is not to be understood, as if any one Virtue, when separated from other Virtues, would be sufficient, either to make a Man compleatly happy in himself, or to recommend him to the Mercy and Favour of God; A Christian, as St.

*James*



*James* speaks, certainly must be perfect, and intire, and wanting Nothing, as to all the essential Branches of Virtue, or Holiness; or he must have a Respect to all the Commandments of God, in Order to be a Partaker of true Happiness, and by being entitled to the Acceptance of his Maker and Governor. And our Saviour, in declaring the Persons, who abound and excel in some particular Virtues, to be blessed, goeth upon a very just Supposition, that the Man, who actually practiseth any one Virtue, upon the pure and genuine Principles and Motives of Religion, will, upon the same, if he doth but consider and reflect, practise all other Virtues whatsoever; and so being universally, or intirely Worthy and Good, he will be made fully happy, and be  
more

more particularly entitled to that Sort of Happiness, which the virtuous Quality, in which he is eminent, prepareth him to partake of. For, it is not without a peculiar Beauty and Elegance, as some have remarked, that our Lord, in the latter Part of each of his Declarations concerning the Blessedness of Men, hath described the Happiness promised to us, under such a Notion, or Image, as most aptly corresponds with the Idea which he had conveyed of our Duty, in the former Part of the Declaration. This Correspondence hath been pointed out in all the Beatitudes; and is indeed, so apparent in most of them, that it cannot fail to strike every one, who readeth them, with any Attention.

Having made this preliminary Observation, to prevent our Misapprehensions

sions of our Saviour's Meaning and Design, and for making his Declarations upon the Subject of Happiness, to appear to be true and perfectly consistent, I shall now proceed, in my following Discourses, to consider the several Beatitudes contained in the Holy Scriptures.

S E R M O N

## S E R M O N II.

Of the Blessedness of the Poor  
in Spirit.

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MATTHEW V. 3.

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for Their's  
is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

**T**H E S E Words of our Saviour, SERM.  
II.  
~  
instead of appearing to contain  
a most important Truth, are thought  
by some to lay down a most extravagant  
Paradox: For what Merit and Blessed-  
ness, say they, can there be in a Tem-  
per, which makes one in Love with  
Poverty and Hardships, or which hin-  
ders him from exerting his Powers,  
for improving his outward Condition,  
and arriving at something Great, or  
Considerable in the World? But who-  
ever

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ever imagine that any Thing of this Sort is implied in this Declaration of our Lord, very much mistake it's Meaning. Our Saviour here speaks, not of a literal Poverty, or the Lowness of a Man's external State, but of a figurative Poverty, a Poverty in a spiritual and moral Sense, denoting a Temper of Mind, which mortifies all the Desires of Covetousness, and vain Ambition in a Man; which prevents his acquiring, or keeping the Wealth and Dignities, and Honours of this World, at the expence of Innocence, Integrity, and a good Character; which makes him, in the highest Elevation of his outward Fortune, always humble and modest, and willing to employ his external Advantages chiefly in promoting the Honour of God, and the Happiness of his Fellow-creatures; and which disposes him, if he is in a moderate or a low Condition, to be contented and thankful, and to discharge the Duties of his Station, with Simplicity and Uprightness of Heart, with trust in God, and sincere good Will to Mankind. This is the Meaning of *Poverty of Spirit*, as contradistinguished



tradistinguished from a literal outward Poverty; as *the Circumcision of the Heart and Spirit*, which St. Paul speaks of, signifies that Purity of Mind and Affection, which is required by Christianity, of which the literal carnal Circumcision of the Jews, was only a Shadow, or Emblem.

Now it is plain, that the Temper which our Saviour here commends, and mentions as the Foundation of the greatest Happiness, though quite remote from the Spirit of this World, and indeed the Reverse of it, is yet very consistent with our having a just Sense of the Value of Riches, and the other outward Advantages of Life, and our possessing ourselves of them by any honourable and lawful Means in our Power, and our making afterwards a becoming Use and Application of them. Even when this Temper makes us utterly to despise all worldly Wealth and Grandeur, if set in Competition with Probity and Honour, when it prevents our being not only unjustly, but indecently eager in the Pursuit of our external Interests, it still allows us for our own innocent Satisfaction, and prompts us for the Sake of doing greater Good

SERM. Good to others, to make the best Improvement that we honestly and reputably can, of our outward State and Circumstances. As the Desires of Wealth, and Power, and Influence, naturally and always universally arise in the Minds of Men, upon a Perception of their Importance for carrying on the great Purposes of Life, the Design of Religion is not to suppress intirely these Desires, but to govern and direct them, and to keep them always in a due Subordination to our Desires of greater and more noble Objects. Our Saviour in some Places, speaks with an Appearance of Harshness and Severity against the Rich; but his Intention certainly was not to represent the Possession of Riches as Evil in itself, but to reprove the Abuse of them, and to put his Followers upon their Guard against the bad Effects, which they commonly produce in those who possess them in great Abundance, such as a Disregard and Neglect of God, and Insolence and Oppressiveness with Respect to Mankind; and to beget in them a calm and moderate Temper in the Acquisition of Wealth, and an humble, temperate,

temperate, equitable, and humane Disposition in the Use of it; in a Word, a *Poverty of Spirit*, without which, Men will neither obtain, nor enjoy Riches, with Innocence and Honour.

It is likewise plain, that the Temper which our Lord inculcates in the Text, is very different from Pusillanimity, or Abjectness of Mind, with which it has been sometimes confounded. The Superiority to the World, which is meant by this Temper, is so far from arguing a feeble and weak State of Mind, or setting a Man in a low and contemptible Light, that it is really the highest Magnanimity and Fortitude, and the only Foundation upon which a truly great and heroic Character is to be supported. This *Poverty of Spirit*, of which our Saviour speaks, presupposes an enlarged Understanding, a just and generous Judgment of Things, a true Sense of the Excellence of Virtue, and the Preferableness of it to all other Objects and Enjoyments; and implies such Firmness and Resolution of Spirit as will make a Man adhere to Virtue, in Opposition to the most importunate Soli-

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II.  


citations of his lower Appetites, and all those delusive fantastick Desires which are so apt to possess and bewilder the Minds of Men, and which actually hurry away the greatest Part of them in Pursuit of a false imaginary Dignity and Satisfaction, to the Loss of their real natural Honour and Happiness. The Men who are governed only by the Wisdom of this World, or are under the Power of a vain Imagination, may think meanly of this Disposition, and despise the Conduct which flows from it, as utterly void both of Sense and Spirit. But whoever are unprejudiced, and hearken to the most obvious Dictates of their superior Faculties, must be persuaded of its incomparable Excellence, and know it to be, as it has always been accounted by the wisest of Men, the only Source of a consistently and uniformly worthy Conduct, the Root from whence every Thing that is most sublime and great, and most manly and honourable in human Life, must spring and grow.

As, therefore, the Spirit or Temper, which our Saviour here recommends, is so worthy in itself, it is very justly  
declared



declared by him, to be the Foundation or Qualification for the high Happiness, which belongs to those who possess it.

*Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, says he, for Their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

For understanding what is meant by the Kingdom of Heaven, we must consider that God, *the great King*, as our Saviour calls him, rules and governs his Creatures, in Proportion to the Nature which he has given them; inanimate and senseless Matter by mere Power, or Force impressed on it; intelligent and moral Agents, by prescribing a Law to them, and engaging them to the Observation of this Law, by rational and moral Considerations and Motives. All Men are naturally subject to the moral Dominion and Government of God, as in the very Constitution of their Beings, he has given them the Notices of their Duty, and furnished them with Power and Help sufficient for performing it. And whoever of them, who have no other Advantages, than those which they receive from Nature, honestly endeavour to act according to that Law which they are under, are to be accounted faithful



SERM. Subjects of the Kingdom of God, and  
II. entitled to a Share of the Rewards of  
it. But as Mankind, when left merely to  
the Guidance and Direction of their natural Faculties, soon fell into great Corruptions, and but in few Instances attained to that Integrity of Heart and Life, which the moral Administration of God designed to bring them to, and which indeed is the only Foundation of their Excellence and Happiness, God was pleased at different Times and Periods, to make some farther Discoveries of his Mind and Will, than the Light of Nature and Reason afforded, first to some particular Persons, amongst the ancient Patriarchs; and afterwards to one whole Nation, by *Moses and the Prophets*; and last of all, to give a Revelation of the most general Importance and Use, by the Preaching and Ministry of his Son: The great End of all which Dispensations, was to establish more firmly than the original Constitution of Nature did, the Authority and Dominion of God over the Minds and Consciences of Men, and to assist Men in rendering a more chearful and exact  
Obedience

Obedience to the Laws of their Maker and righteous Governor, than by any other Means they could have given to them. And as the Dispensation of the Gospel contributes most remarkably to this Purpose, by adopting, and clearly promulgating the great Laws of universal Righteousness, which God naturally wrote in the Hearts of Men, and making Obedience to them the essential Condition of Happiness; and by affording at the same Time the greatest Encouragement and Assistance that can be desired for observing these Laws, particularly by a full and free offer of Grace and Pardon, and of eternal Life and Salvation to all sincerely penitent and obedient Persons: as the Gospel contributes thus effectually to establish the Empire of God over the Minds of Men, and to promote the Practice of Virtue and Righteousness in the World, it is with great Propriety called *the Kingdom of God*, or *the Kingdom of Heaven*. This is *the Kingdom of Heaven*, which, St. *John* the Baptist said, *was at Hand*, a little before our Saviour appeared; and which our Lord himself at his Entrance

SERM. on his public Ministry, declared was  
 II. approaching, and which some Time afterwards he told the Jews was *come to them*. This is the primary Notion of *the Kingdom of Heaven* spoken of in the Text, and in many other Places of the New Testament. But as the Life of Man, without a Reference to a future State, would be a defective unfinished Plan; as it is extremely probable from the Light of Reason, and certain from the Revelation of the Gospel, that we are intended for such a State: And as the moral Government of God over Mankind, is not confined within the Bounds of this present Life, where it can never receive its Consummation, or full Accomplishment, but will shine out in its greatest Lustre in another World, where all delegated Rule, Authority, and Power being at an End, and all Enemies subdued, and a final Separation made between the wicked and the just, the former being *punished with an everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of his Power*, the wise and virtuous of Mankind of all Ages and Generations, shall

shall together with the higher Orders of intelligent and good Spirits make one glorious, triumphant, and blessed Society, who shall most joyfully and affectionately unite in celebrating the Praises of their Creator, the Parent of Good, and Fountain of Excellence and Happiness, and yield, according to their several Capacities and Stations, an intire and perfect Submission to the Will and Pleasure of him their great Head and Law-giver: As it is in the future State, that the Authority of God will be thus most effectually acknowledged and honoured, and his Glory most illustriously displayed in the Homage and Obedience of his rational Creatures, the Kingdom of God, or of Heaven, which is begun in this World, and greatly promoted under the Dispensation of Christianity, must always be supposed to refer to this State, and ultimately to terminate in it. Sometimes indeed the Kingdom of God in this Life, and his Kingdom in the next, are spoken of as distinct Things: But still they must be understood to be necessarily and inseparably connected; the one being prepara-

SERM. tory and introductory to the other, the  
II. Scene in which the Minds of God's  
faithful Servants are so proved and disciplined, so purified and tempered into a Conformity to his most amiable Nature, and a Submission to his Will, that they are fit at last to be translated into the Heavenly Regions, to reign with God in Glory, to mix in *the general Assembly* of pure and perfect Spirits, to join in their noble and honourable Employments, and to partake for ever of their Dignity and Felicity.

Thus we see what is to be understood by *the Kingdom of Heaven*, which is promised to *the Poor in Spirit*: How the Persons of this Character are intitled to a Share or Place in this, will appear, if we consider that by the Temper of their Minds, they are peculiarly prepared and qualified to become the true and faithful Subjects of it. By *Poverty in Spirit*, as it was explained above, is meant a Disengagement from the Temper or Spirit of this World, a deliberate and settled Contempt of all external Splendour and Greatness, of all the Dignities,



Dignities and Possessions of Life, in Comparison of Innocence, Integrity, and true Honour; and a calm Choice and Pursuit of Virtue above all other Objects, as being both the highest Excellence and chief Good of Mankind. Now this is a Temper, which as it is, at least in some Degree, necessary to a Man's entering into the Kingdom of Heaven, so it directly leads those who have it, to become Members, or Subjects of that Kingdom. The great Impediments to Men's submitting to the Authority of our Saviour, and becoming Members of that Kingdom, which he was sent into the World to erect, we find at first, were an immoderate Love of Wealth, which made them unwilling to lose those outward Possessions and Goods, which the Profession of the Gospel at that Time frequently required them to part with; and a Desire of Applause and *Honour from one another* rather than *that Honour which cometh from God*: And some of the principal Hindrances in the Way of Men's embracing and obeying the Doctrine of our Lord, have all along been, and still are,

*the*

SERM. *the Deceitfulness of Riches, and the Cares*  
 II. of Ambition and Voluptuousness, which  
 ~~~~~  
 stifle every good Sentiment and Principle in them, and are quite inconsistent with that Simplicity and Ingenuity of Mind, which alone can dispose a Man to prefer Truth and Right, Virtue and a good Conscience, with the Pleasures and Hopes which flow from thence, to all other Interests and Enjoyments. By an undue Love of this World, therefore, Men will be kept out of the Kingdom of God's Grace in this Life, and of Course excluded from the Kingdom of his Glory in the next: Or if any Persons with this Temper, are nominally the Subjects of God in this World, yet this outward Character, or Designation can be of no Use to them, but will rather encrease their Guilt, and aggravate their Condemnation. But now a contrary Disposition with Respect to the World, which, though it allows us to have a just Concern about its Enjoyments and Advantages, yet renders us superior to all its Temptations, and makes us to delight in Goodness, the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the Approba-
 tion



tion of God and good Men, more than in any Things which we can have in Exchange for them, naturally prepares a Man to become a Disciple of our Saviour. A Person of this Turn of Mind, *hath heard and learned of the Father*; and will consequently *come to our Lord*: He hath already a just Notion of the Excellence and general Obligations of Virtue, and will find the End of the Gospel-Institution so agreeable to his native Sense of Things, and such Provision made by it for promoting effectually what he will see to be his highest Dignity and Happiness, that he will of Course be well affected to the Religion of our Saviour, and upon proper Evidence being laid before him of the Justice of our Lord's Pretensions, will readily acknowledge and submit to his Authority. And being thus invested with the Privileges and Honours of that Kingdom, in which our Saviour, by the Will and Appointment of his Father, rules in this World, he may, by making the proper Use and Improvement of these, which the excellent Disposition of his Heart will naturally urge and prompt

SERM. prompt him to, secure and ascertain
II. to himself, what must be the Height
of the Desires and Wishes of every wise
and good Man, an Admission at last
into the glorious and eternal Kingdom
of God in Heaven.

Having now sufficiently explained and
illustrated the Doctrine of our Saviour
in the Text, I shall proceed to make
two or three Observations upon it, and
so conclude.

1. We may upon this Occasion take
Notice of the Rashness, or Disingenui-
ty of some of the Adversaries of Chris-
tianity, in attempting to fix an absurd,
ridiculous Meaning upon Passages of
Scripture, which are very fairly and ea-
sily capable of a rational Interpretation.
The Text is one Instance, among many
others, in which the sacred Writings
have met with this injudicious or unfair
Treatment; having been represented, as
recommending to Mankind a Conduct al-
together foolish and contemptible, incon-
sistent both with the publick Good, and
the comfortable and decent Enjoyment
of private Life: Whereas every one,
who attends to the Words of our Lord,
and

and is acquainted with the common Phraseology of the Jews, must see that it has no such Intention or Meaning, but that it indeed conveys to us a most noble and important Instruction. If the Persons who cavil at some Forms of Expression in Scripture, particularly at some which occur in its moral Precepts and Instructions, which has been very common of late, only alledged, that the figurative, proverbial, and to us unusual Phrases, which we sometimes find in them, are not the fittest for the universal Information of Mankind in their Duty, there might, perhaps, be some Truth in what they said. This however reflects no Dishonour on the sacred Writings, which contain Instructions of various Kinds, and accommodated to the different Capacities and Degrees of Understanding in Mankind: And provided the most necessary Things be delivered with such Simplicity and Clearness, that Persons of plain Understanding, and common Ingenuity of Mind, must both see and feel the Truth of them, which is really the Case, the Difficulties which occur in
any

SERM. any Declarations or Precepts of sacred
 II. Writ, may very well be left to be explained by the Industry and Skill of those, who have Ability and Leisure for the Examination of them; and to be made, by their Help, intelligible and useful even to People of the lowest Capacity. But to charge any of the moral Instructions and Directions of Scripture with Absurdity, only because a Phraseology is used in them, to which we are at present unaccustomed, though probably very familiar and easy to those who lived when the sacred Books were wrote, and which will still appear to be very intelligible and rational to all who are capable, and will be at Pains to search into the Meaning of it, discovers either great Perverseness and Unfairness, or great Ignorance and Want of Judgment, and is a Proceeding which with Respect to any other ancient Writings, would by all Men of Sense and Candour be immediately condemned.

2. We may here observe the great Difference between the Judgment of God, and the common Opinion of the World, concerning the Things which



which constitute the Worth, and lay the Foundation of the Happiness of Mankind. This appears in a great many Instances; but perhaps in none more remarkably, than with Respect to the Quality mentioned by our Saviour in the Text, which in the ordinary Estimation of Men is a Thing of no Value or Consequence; which instead of being deemed an Excellence and Ornament, and the Foundation of Happiness to any Person, is rather thought to be something very mean and dastardly, and unworthy of a Man of Wisdom and Spirit, which must necessarily degrade and sink us, and keep us always in a depressed and despicable State. These are the Sentiments which the Men *who trust in their Wealth, and boast themselves in the Multitude of their Riches, and which the Children of this World in general, have of Poverty of Spirit, or a Temper of Coolness and Moderation with Respect to our outward Interests and Enjoyments: Whereas the same Disposition is of such great Price in the Sight of God, that he makes it the Ground and Condition of*

our

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our partaking of the excellent Privileges and Advantages of his Kingdom in this World, and our obtaining a Share in the Glory and Happiness of his everlasting Kingdom in the next. Whoever therefore acquires this Temper, and acts accordingly, may see what they are to expect from the inconsiderate and prejudiced Part of Mankind, to have *their Life accounted Madness*, as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* expresses it, *and their End to be without Honour*. But surely well may such think it *a small Matter to be thus judged of Men*, when they know that there lies an Appeal to a higher and an unerring Judge, and that his Determination is already in their Favour; that the Disposition of Mind which prevails in them, and is so much undervalued by an ignorant and vain World, stands high in the Esteem of God, and invests them with the truest Dignity and Honour at present, and will confer still greater Glory upon them at last, when *they shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father*, and appear to the Conviction even of those who now

may revile and deride them, to be the most wise, excellent, and happy of all Men.

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3. Lastly, As the Spirit inculcated by our Saviour in the Text, is of the greatest Excellence and Importance, we may see how necessary it is that we should apply ourselves to the Acquisition of it, with the utmost Zeal and Diligence. And certainly, if we have any Greatness of Mind or generous Sense of Things in us, if we have any noble or laudable Ambition, or even any rational Attachment to our own Interest, we cannot but be exceedingly careful to form and raise in ourselves a Temper of Mind, which prepares us for entering into the most worthy and honourable Society, and makes us *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*; which instates us Members of a Kingdom, from whence we shall derive more solid Glory and Happiness, than we could from possessing *all the Kingdoms of this World, and the Glory of them*. And there is a greater Reason for using Zeal and Pains in forming and cultivating this Temper, as it is

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certain,

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certain, that without them, we shall not attain to it, in any eminent Degree. For raising this Temper to such a Height in us, as will be sufficient to govern our Actions and Behaviour in Life, we must have a true, comprehensive, and steady View of the several Objects of this World, and take up no extravagant Fancies about their Worth; we must always maintain a lively Impression of the superior Dignity of Virtue, and strengthen our original Desire and Love of it; we must have a just Notion of the Superintendency of the Deity, and his Regard to good Men even in this World; and a firm, strong, and habitual Belief of that future State, which is to succeed the present transitory Scene, in which the Good and Virtuous will be honoured and rewarded, infinitely beyond all the present Conceptions, Imaginations, and fondest Wishes of Mankind. These are the Principles, from which alone, such a confirmed Temper of Moderation with Respect to this World can proceed, as will enable us *to use it without abusing it*, and to go through the various Affairs and Occurrences of it,

it, and still to *keep ourselves unspotted from it.* A natural Indolence of Temper, or a Stupidity of Mind which makes a Man incapable of using and enjoying the World, or some sudden Discontent with the World, occasioned by Disappointments and Perplexities, may produce in some a great Deal of seeming Indifference towards it. But this is very different from the *Poverty of Spirit*, recommended by our Saviour, which arises from great Consideration, and the most rational and enlarged Sentiments and Notions, and is supported by having the best Principles well settled in a Man, and wrought into the very Temper and Complexion of his Soul. Now as the Acquisition of these Notions, and this Constitution of Soul, is plainly the utmost Effort of human Industry and Attention, whoever would in any remarkable Degree, attain to the *Virtue of Poverty of Spirit*, must in Order to it, exert all possible Zeal, Vigour, and Circumspection. This is necessary in all, who aim at improving themselves in this excellent Disposition of Mind, and more especially in

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those, who by Reason of the Temptations incident to their Circumstances and Rank in Life, meet with the greatest Difficulties, or Obstacles in making Improvements in it: There is indeed no Situation or State of Life, inconsistent with the Attainment of this Virtue: The Persons of the highest Quality and most affluent Fortune, may be as *Poor in Spirit*, and no doubt in many Instances are so, as any others whatsoever. But yet it is certain, that the Great and Powerful, and Rich among Men, must, from the very Nature of their Situation, be in greater Danger of falling short of the due Degrees of this Temper, than Persons in a moderate, or more humble Condition are. Our Saviour, who *knew what was in Man*, did not, with Reason, speak of the great Difficulty which the Rich would find in entering into the Kingdom of God. And therefore whoever of those, distinguished by the Eminency of their Station, or Fortune in the World, are from a native Generosity and Probity of Heart, or an Ambition of higher and more unfading Honours than any that flow from the Will of Man, or

a Desire of a more substantial and durable Inheritance than can be obtained on Earth ; whoever, I say, of the higher Ranks of Men, are thus moved to improve themselves in this excellent Temper, which will be a Source of the most real and incorruptible Dignity, Honour, and Joy to them, should perpetually stand upon their Guard against the Temptations which surround them, and are so apt to divert their Thoughts another Way, and be most assiduous and careful in fixing those Sentiments and Principles in their Minds, which are necessary to their attaining to the End they aim at. And to assist them in this Matter, let them have the Admonition or Charge which *St. Paul* leaves with them, and which lays their Duty very fully before them, frequently revolving in their Minds. *Charge them, that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, not trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy: that they do Good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;*

SERM. *laying up, in Store for themselves a good*
II. *Foundation against the Time to come, that*
 *they may lay hold on eternal Life.*

S E R M O N III.

Of the Blessedness of sincere
Mourners.

MATTHEW V. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn: for they
shall be comforted.*

AS from the Constitution of this SERM.
III.
World, which was, however, the
Effect of infinite Wisdom and Goodness,
Mankind are unavoidably exposed to
manifold Calamities and Distresses, and
are frequently thrown into a State of
Sorrow and Mourning, it is, certainly,
both a becoming, and a prudent Thing
in us, to consider what our Temper and
Behaviour ought to be in such a Situa-
tion; how we may either relieve our-
selves from our Distresses, or bear those
of

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of them, from which we cannot be delivered, with a proper Patience, Resignation, and Fortitude of Mind. From a State of Pain and Suffering, we have a strong Aversion, by Nature; and for the most Part, feel this Aversion in an higher Degree, than there is, perhaps, any Foundation for in Nature. For though *no Chastisement* or Affliction, is *for the present joyous, but grievous*; yet there are always Considerations at Hand, which may soon reconcile us to the greatest Afflictions, that are at all tolerable; and Methods to be used, for extracting from them, more abundant Consolation, and more solid Happiness, than we could have derived from a more settled and uniform Flow of Prosperity, Ease, and Joy, in the World. *Solomon* hath long ago determined, that *it is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting: For that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to Heart. That Sorrow is better than Laughter; for by the Sorrow of the Countenance, the Heart is made better. That, therefore, the Heart of the Wise, is in the House of Mourning; while the Heart*
of

of the Fool is in the House of Mirth. And one, *who is greater than Solomon*, hath declared in the Text, that the Persons, who mourn, in a Way that becometh them, under the Afflictions and Evils, to which they are liable, *are blessed*; that notwithstanding the grievous Sensations which they frequently feel, and notwithstanding the Opinion, which the inconsiderate and ill-judging Part of the World have of the Misery of their Condition, there is a certain Foundation for their partaking of the truest Pleasures and Gladness of Heart; that they shall receive Advantages and Benefits from their Troubles, which will overbalance all the Uneasinesses and Pains of them, and which will most nobly, and fully support and comfort them.

The Evils which give Rise to the Sorrowing and Mourning of Men, are, either the natural Evils, which they meet with in the World; or the Evils which they find in their own Minds, their moral Imperfections, Infirmities, and Depravities. Both these Kinds of Evil must often raise in us, the most pungent Grief and Distress; and if we are duly exercised

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exercised with them, they will in Time yield us the peaceful Fruits of Righteousness; in great Improvements in Virtue, in an invincible Strength and Firmness of Mind, a solid Hope and Confidence in God, and a stable Tranquillity and Joy of Heart.

The natural Evils, which we must necessarily meet with in the World, or *to which we are born, as the Sparks fly upward* are various and well known; such as Sickness and Pain of Body; Anxiety and Depression of Mind; the Ruin, or the Diminution of our Fortunes; the Disappointment of our Hopes; the Loss of Friends; Calumny, Reproach, Persecution, and the like. It is impossible for a Man to live long in the World, without encountering these, or some Calamities of a like Nature: they may indeed fall heavier upon some, than upon others, in Proportion to the Weakness of their Constitutions, and their Want of Strength to bear them, and to their different Educations, and the settled Habits of Thinking which they have contracted: And some may be exposed to more of them, than others

others are. But all Men may lay their Account for struggling with at least some of them, in an higher, or lower Degree. And in Order to our Mourning properly under them, we must, not only be sensibly affected with them, and feel the Smart of them, but even while we endure the sharpest Pain from them, we must bear them, with Calmness, Patience, and Submission, from a due Attention and Regard to the Author and End of them. For *Afflictions come not forth from the Dust, nor do Troubles spring out of the Ground*: They are not fortuitous, or casual Events; nor are they to be considered, as merely the Productions of natural Causes, or as only the Effects of the Violence and Rage of Men against us. Vain Men, indeed, observing that the Miseries which come upon them, are brought to pass, by Causes established in Nature, or by the ungoverned Passions and Will of their Fellow-Mortals, are apt to ascribe their Sufferings intirely to the Influence of these, without ever reflecting, that there is One, high above all, who at first appointed the Course and Laws of Nature, who

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who still hath all Nature perfectly at his Command, and fulfilleth his own Purposes by it, as he pleaseth; and without whose Influence, inanimate and unintelligent Matter can effect Nothing; and who even controuleth and overruleth the Counsels and Wills of the fiercest and most tyrannical of Men, so as to render them, without their intending it, the Instrument of his Providence, for correcting and punishing a sinful World; of which, we have several Examples in the Writings of the Prophets. The Dictates both of true Philosophy and Religion teach us, that *it is the Lord who formeth the Light, and createth Darkness; who maketh Peace, and createth Evil; that the Lord killeth, and maketh alive; that he bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up: that he maketh sore, and bindeth up; that he woundeth, and his Hands make whole. Out of the Mouth of the most High, saith the Prophet, proceedeth not Evil, and Good; so that, by whatsoever Means, our Troubles and Distresses are brought upon us, God himself is still to be considered as the Original and Director of them.*

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them. Indeed, they come upon us, in Consequence of a Plan, which his infinite Wisdom and Goodness at first formed, and to which he still adhereth, for the happy Government of this World, and are all intended and calculated for the most beneficial Purposes, with Respect to Mankind; for curing the Distempers of their Minds, and restoring them to a State of inward Health and Soundness; for reclaiming them from their Follies and Vices, for inspiring them with the truest Wisdom, and engaging them to the Practice of the most amiable Virtues, and thereby laying the Foundation for perpetual Peace of Mind to them in this Life, and for the everlasting Dignity and Happiness of their Nature, in the next: As shall more fully appear in another Part of this Discourse. When, therefore, we meet with any severe Distresses, or Calamities, in the ordinary Course of the World, we are neither to repine and murmur at them, nor to be stupid and unconcerned under them, but to bear them with Patience and Resolution, and with all the Respect, that is due to the Acts
of

SERM. of perfect Wisdom, and the most tender
 III. Compassion ; considering them, as
 ~~~~~ *the Rod of God*, chastising and correcting  
 us for our Good, to *the Voice* of which,  
 as the Prophet exhorteth, we are care-  
 fully *to hearken*, and from which we  
 are to draw all the wholesome Instruc-  
 tion, which it is fitted to afford to us.

This is the Temper, which must pre-  
 vail in those, who would decently and  
 becomingly mourn under the natural  
 Evils and Afflictions, which befall them  
 in Life.

The other great Source of our Sor-  
 rowing and Mourning is within ourselves,  
 a Consciousness of our moral Imperfecti-  
 ons, Infirmities, and Depravities. The  
 Pain derived to us from hence maketh us  
 far more miserable, than any of our Dis-  
 tresses and Sufferings from the natural  
 Evils of Life, can make us. The Consci-  
 ousness of Vice, or of moral Depravity, in  
 an high Degree, giveth us a Sense of an  
 intrinsic Baseness and Vileness, of some-  
 thing that is very malignant and odious  
 in our Nature, which cannot but make  
 us to abhor ourselves, as well as render  
 us suspicious and afraid of other intelli-  
 gent,

gent, powerful, moral Beings. This Consciouſness, if it remaineth long in the Mind, is enough to destroy all the Satisfaction and Comfort of the most prosperous outward Fortune, to make the whole Face of Nature, to appear languid and sickly to a Man, and Life itself to become a Burthen to him. *The Spirit of a Man, saith Solomon, will sustain his Infirmities,* the natural Strength and Courage of the Mind, usually supporteth a Man, under the Pressure of common Evils and Afflictions; *but a wounded Spirit,* a Spirit touched with a lively penetrating Sense of Wickedness and Guilt, and torn and distracted with the various tormenting Passions, which arise from thence, *who can bear it?* This carrieth such an hideous and terrifying Aspect, that no Mortal can endure to behold it. This painful Sense of Sin and Wickedness, is felt in very different Degrees by Men. Some of the greatest Sinners, seem to feel but little, or nothing of it; though in all Reason, they ought to be most deeply affected with an Apprehension of Guilt. These are they, who have sinned, till *they are past Feeling,*

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*Feeling, whose Consciences are seared, and who are given over to a reprobate Mind.*

But notwithstanding the unmanly Ease which such enjoy, in pursuing their wicked Courses, they are really in the most deplorable State, in which any Men can be in this World; a State, where they must be dead to all the Sentiments of Virtue and Honour, and consequently to all true Happiness, where there can be but very little Hope of their Recovery, or of their Escaping in the End, from the most terrible Ruin and Misery. Others, who have gone a great Length in Sinning, and are chargeable with many wilful Acts of Wickedness, but who are not quite profligate and abandoned, who still retain a Sense of Good, and of Evil, and can see the Worth of the one, and Ill-Desert of the other, must necessarily in taking a serious Review of their State, be filled with the most bitter Remorse and Anguish, and the greatest Confusion and Horror: *The Remembrance of their Sins, must certainly be grievous to them, and the Burthen of them quite intolerable.* Nay, even good Men, indeed,

deed the very best, who have made the clearest Escape from the Corruptions of the World, who, in the general Course of their Lives, are free from all gross Offences, and *are walking*, according to the merciful Construction of the Gospel, *in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless*; must still have such a Sense of their Imperfections and Failures, as will make them to feel frequently a piercing Compunction of Spirit; as will give them a mortifying and humbling Conception of themselves, in the Presence of God, and afford them daily Occasions, for at least some Degree of Sorrow and Mourning before him.

Now to mourn; as it becometh us, under a Sense of our Sins, we must be, not only shocked and alarmed, at an Apprehension of their evil Fruits, and dangerous Consequences; but must work in ourselves, a most ingenuous and contrite Frame of Spirit, from a Consideration of the Baseness and Ingratitude, with which we are chargeable in having committed them;



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on Account of our having *perverted that which is right*, and done Things unworthy of us, and disgraceful to the excellent Faculties, which God originally gave us; on Account of our having rebelled against that Authority, to which the whole rational and moral Creation is most rightfully subject, and trespassed against the Appointments of perfect Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness; on Account of our having disobeyed and dishonoured our most gracious and indulgent Parent, and abused the Kindness of our greatest and most constant Friend and Benefactor. From all these Considerations, we must, if we would mourn, as is necessary, for our Offences, raise in ourselves *a godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance unto Salvation, not to be repented of.*

If we are in the Number of those, who have committed many flagrant, deliberate, and wilful Crimes, we must, as a great Sinner is said to have done in the Exercises of his Repentance, earnestly *beseech the Lord our God, and humble ourselves greatly before the God of our Fathers*: We must take to ourselves,

elves, *Shame and Confusion of Face*, while we readily give to God, the *Praise of his Patience, Long-suffering, and Forbearance* towards us, and instantly resolve to *despise and abuse* these no longer; but to set about an universal Amendment of our Conduct; being full of those Affections, of *Indignation and Revenge, of Fear, of Carefulness, of Zeal, and vehement Desire*, which St. Paul approveth and commendeth in sincere Penitents: which must make us heartily displeased with ourselves; for the Perverseness, Ingratitude, and Folly, of which we have been guilty: which must make us to think *the Time past of our Life, more than enough to have wrought the Will of the most High*, and render us infinitely solicitous not to sin any more: which must put us upon the most diligent Use of all the Means of a true Repentance, and a thorough Reformation; such as serious Consideration, frequent Self-Examination, strict Watchfulness over our Hearts, and every Part of our Behaviour, and fervent humble Devotion: which, in short, must never suffer us to be easy, till we have made such a consider-

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able Progress in Goodness, and fixed in ourselves such an Habit of it, that there can be no great Danger of our Relapsing, but that we may rather have Reason to hope, that we shall continue stedfast and unmoveable in our Duty, and go on to still higher Perfection.

Or, if we are happily among those, who cannot accuse themselves, of having ever followed what can be properly called a Course of Vice, or even of having committed many gross, presumptuous, and wilful Sins; but who are only labouring under the common Frailties of Men, and falling into Sins of Ignorance, Infirmary and Surprise: Though these need not greatly alarm, or disturb us, nor ever destroy our Confidence in God, yet they may be justly made the Matter of our most sincere Humiliation and Mourning in the Sight of God; as they must be considered, to have been in some Degree, voluntary: as we cannot but be sensible, that though we did not directly allow ourselves in them, yet they might have been more effectually avoided, by greater Caution and Circumspection. And we are to express our  
Concern

Concern for them, by confessing and bewailing them before God; by lamenting, that we find so much Imperfection, and such an Allay of Evil in us, after we have had Time and Advantages enough, to have subdued more intirely all Propensities to Vice in our Hearts, and to have arrived at a more pure and spiritual, and a more quick and vigorous Sense of Divine Things; by resolving on stricter Vigilance and closer Attention to our Conduct for the future, and by acquiring and cultivating such a refined and delicate Taste in all Points relating to good Morals, as will carry us on to great Sublimities in Goodness, and enable us to keep clear from many Defects and Blemishes, which pass quite unheeded by the inconsiderate Part of the World, or at most, are regarded by them, as Weaknesses necessarily incident to the present Condition of our Nature.

And thus I have opened up the Character of the Persons, whom, our Saviour, in the Text, declareth to be *blest*. It remaineth now to be shewn, what that Comfort is, which such may expect

SERM. spect to receive, and how they will be  
 III. happy in partaking of it.

Now the Comfort, which the Persons, who mourn properly and becomingly, under the Distresses and Afflictions, which they meet with, may expect to obtain, is that, which ariseth, either from the Hope of a Deliverance from some of the more grievous Evils which they endure, or from the Benefits and Advantages, which they shall receive from their Afflictions in general, which will far overbalance all the Pains and Miseries of them, and make them easy, contented, and happy under them.

First, one Source of Comfort to those, who mourn rightly under Afflictions, is the Hope of a Deliverance, from those Evils, which press most heavily and severely upon them. To be under deep Distress, to suffer Extremity of Pain, without any Expectation of Relief, is enough to distract, or to stupify the Mind, and to make a Man to sink intirely under his Burthen: whereas to have Hope in Misery, or to have a clear Prospect of the Removal of it, in a little Time, must greatly support and strengthen the  
 the



the Spirit of a Man in his Afflictions, and preserve him from Fainting under them. Now there are hardly any Evils incident to Men, from which Relief, at least in some Measure, is not to be expected. If they should mourn under bodily Pains and Sickness, for these there are almost always Remedies provided in Nature, which being skillfully applied, may very probably effect their Recovery: or if their Disorders should be such, as are not to be cured by any Art, or Assistance in this World, yet, Death, which in this, as well as in several other Cases, is no undesirable Event, will soon exempt them, from all such Pains and Maladies for the future. If they should be oppressed with Poverty, reduced, perhaps, from an affluent and plentiful Fortune, to a State of Indigence and Want; yet, if they be really deserving, they may still hope to find some Resource in the Humanity and Generosity of their Neighbours; or that the Providence of God, will so bless their own Industry and Endeavours, as to enable them to retrieve their Affairs, and even to render *their latter End*, which

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was the Case of *Job*, *more prosperous than their Beginning*. If they should suffer in their good Name, if their Characters, should for a Time be blasted, by the malignant Breath of Calumny and Envy, yet, if they have in themselves a clear Assurance of their Innocence, they may depend upon it, that this will in Time appear; that in Spight of all the black Arts of Detraction, and to the Mortification and Confusion of those who have reproached them, *their Righteousness will spring forth as the Light, and the Justice of their Cause, as the Noon-Day*. Or, if they should grieve and mourn from a Cause of a different Nature, a Sense of moral Evil, and of Unworthiness in the Sight of God; yet, even from this most intolerable of all Distresses, they may find a certain Relief in a sincere Contrition of Heart, and the Exercise of a true Repentance. This will prove a Balm for the Wounds of their Consciences, will bind up their broken Spirits, and *restore to them the Joy of God's Salvation*.

And when Men have thus obtained Relief from any sore Distresses, under which

which they have lain, all uneasy Sensations from them will cease. They will feel no Bitterness, or Pain, in reflecting upon what they have endured: nay, rather the Pleasure accompanying the State of Ease, into which they have got, will be heightened, in Proportion to the long and grievous Train of Calamities and Sufferings, from which they have been delivered.

But though God hath so contrived and ordered Things, as that they, who are duely and rightly affected under Afflictions, may almost always expect to find, at least, some Relief from the more severe and oppressive of them, which, if not soon removed, would overwhelm them, and render them quite incapable of attending to the Business of Life; yet, he never intended this World, for a State of unvaried and uninterrupted Tranquillity and Ease. All the general Laws, by which he governeth it, seem indeed to be plainly calculated for the Production of Happiness, or some Sort of Good. But some Mixture of Evil, was probably necessary in any Scheme, that could have been formed

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ed for the universal Benefit of such a System of Beings, as Mankind are ; who have some excellent Powers, and amiable Affections, which must be disciplined and strengthened, improved and perfected, by Culture of various Kinds, particularly by that of frequent Sufferings, and the going through Scenes of Adversity and Distress. *Solomon*, therefore, hath frequently observed, that *God hath given Sorrow, and Grief, and sore Travel to the Sons of Men*, as Part of their *Portion under the Sun* : accordingly, in fact, we find, that no sooner are Men born into the World, than they give Evidence of their Indigences and Distresses ; and that every Stage of Life, from Infancy to old Age, hath its peculiar Troubles ; and that even every Day, as our Saviour intimateth, bringeth its own Evil along with it, sufficient for trying and proving our Patience and Constancy of Mind, our Affiance in God, and Resignation to the Will of Providence. The Comfort, then, which those who mourn, with the greatest Propriety and Decency, under their Calamities, may expect to receive, ariseth  
not

not from an entire Exemption, in any Part of their Lives, from all Evil and Pain; for that the Lot of Humanity will not admit of; but proceedeth chiefly from the Benefits, which their Afflictions, when rightly improved will afford to them; for to those, who are duly *exercised with* them, they will yield, as the Apostle declareth, *the peaceful Fruits of Righteousness*: They will naturally bring them to Consideration and Repentance; will mortify them to this World, and raise their Hearts far above it; will teach them Humility, Patience, and Submission to God; in short, they will form in them, a solid Temper of all Piety and Virtue; and in Consequence of this, will endue them with a noble Firmness and Strength of Mind; will establish them in a State of Peace, and Joy, and Confidence in God in this World, and procure them everlasting Consolation, and compleat Happiness, in the next.

Nothing can be better calculated for bringing all, who have any ingenuous, or good Principles in them, to reflect seriously upon themselves, to Contrition,  
and



SERM. and the Exercifes of Repentance, than  
III. a State of Affliction. In the Times of  
Prosperity, bad Men are quite froward  
and untractable, and obftinately bent  
upon their evil Ways, and even good  
Men are apt to be too much elated, and  
inattentive to the Defigns and Calls  
of Providence: *But in the Day of Ad-*  
*versity, the latter at least, will consider,*  
When the Hand of God, actually lieth  
heavy upon them, chastising and cor-  
recting them for their Offences, they  
can hardly fail to relent, to be softened  
and humbled, and put upon *searching*  
*and trying their Ways, and turning again*  
*unto the Lord;* when they find them-  
selves to be bound in Fetters, and holden  
in the Cords of Affliction, they will then  
see their Work, and their Transgression,  
that they have exceeded; they will also  
open their Ears to Discipline, and to the  
Voice of God, commanding them to turn  
from their Iniquity. And surely, in this  
Case, it is meet to be said unto God, *I*  
*have borne Chastisement, I will not offend*  
*any more; that which I see not, teach thou*  
*me; and if I have done Iniquity, I will do*  
*no more.*

A State of Distress and Suffering hath also an admirable Tendency, to cure us of an immoderate Concern about this World, even to mortify us, not only to its sinful, but to all its vain and fantastic Enjoyments, and to fix our Minds upon some far more sublime, important, and permanent Objects. There is hardly any Situation more dangerous to a human Mind, than a perfect Calm, and an uninterrupted Flow of Prosperity in the World. This proves the Bane of Virtue, in all, who are at no Pains, to guard against outward Temptations; who are apt immediately to become insolent and secure; *to forget the God, who is above; and to say to their Souls, take your Ease, eat, drink, and be merry; Let us fill ourselves with new Wine, and the Morrow shall be as this Day, and still more abundant; to live in Pleasure on the Earth, to grow wanton, and to nourish their Hearts, as in the Day of Slaughter.* Nay, such a Situation, may, sometimes insensibly corrupt the Hearts even of wise and good Men, in some Measure; will be apt at least to cool their Desires of Virtue, to abate their Zeal in the Performance

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 III. their Progress towards Perfection, to  
 ~~~~~ attach them too closely to this Earth,  
 and to render the Thoughts of their
 Departure from it, unbecomingly uneasy
 to them. *O Death, how bitter is the
 Remembrance of thee, to a Man that liveth
 at Rest in his Possessions; to the Man that
 hath nothing to vex him, and that hath
 Prosperity in all Things!* God, therefore,
 in pure Goodness, to his dear Children;
 and faithful Servants, often involveth
 them in a Series of Calamities and Afflictions
 in the World, than which,
 nothing can be more effectual to prevent
 their being too much captivated by
 it, or their setting their Affections too
 intensely upon it; which cannot but im-
 bitter the World to their Taste; and
 give them the most sensible and affecting
 Conviction of its being a Scene of
Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; about
 which, therefore, merely in Point of
 Prudence, they should not be over care-
 ful and solicitous; which must make
 them to detest all its unlawful Pleasures
 and Advantages, and to flee from them,
 as the Source of all Evil and Misery;
 and

and to disesteem and disrelish even its most innocent Delights, in Comparison of Virtue, and the divine Consolation and Enjoyment which it affordeth. And as a Scene of Affliction, is thus apt to wean a Man from an immoderate Love of this World, and comparatively speaking, to deaden him to all that is earthly, vain, and perishing; so it naturally prepareth him for raising his Heart, to far higher, more noble, and permanent Objects, even to the *Things which are above*, which are best suited to the Dignity of his Nature, and which alone can yield an Happiness adequate to his Desires, and commensurate to the Duration of his Being, which will be immortal and everlasting, in another World. It is certain, that the going through a little of this Discipline, with proper Dispositions of Mind, will carry a Man much farther in a little Time in a just Contempt of the World and a well-founded Renunciation of the vain Fashions of a degenerate, or licentious Age, than his imbibing all the Notions of *Monkery*, and his submitting to all the Rules of the most recluse and austere Life would ever do.

Again,

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Again, a Train of Affliction is extremely well settled to teach us some most amiable and necessary Virtues: such as *Humility*, as it maketh us to feel most sensibly the Vanity and Impotency of our State, and our total Insufficiency to procure and establish our own Happiness; and as it immediately and clearly suggesteth to us, how absurd it would be for such poor Creatures, as we are; who cannot be sure of one Day of continued Ease and Prosperity, to strive against our Maker and Governor, and to despise and insult our Fellows, Partakers of the same Nature, and born to the same Privileges and Honors with ourselves. Very justly, indeed, hath it been said, that *Pride was not made for Man, nor a haughty Spirit for him, that is born of a Woman.* *Patience* likewise; when we find that Misfortunes and Calamities, are altogether unavoidable in our Lot; that God seeth it fit to exercise the very best of Men with them for their Good; that we must endure them, whether we are willing, or unwilling to do so; that to fret and repine under them, will only irritate our Pain,

Pain, and aggravate our Distress; and that the only Way to render them tolerable, as well as profitable, is to bear them, with Calmness and Meekness, without Murmurs, or Complaints. A Course of Affliction, must also naturally teach us *Resignation to the Will of God*: As it furnisheth us with many Experiments of our being intirely in the Hands of God, and necessarily dependant on him, for protecting us from Evil and bestowing on us, all the Good that we want and hope for; and as we must conclude, when we make the proper Use of our Troubles, that in *very Faithfulness he afflicteth us*; that he *chastiseth us, not for his own Pleasure, but for our Profit*, even for that greatest and best of all Purposes in Relation to us, *the making us Partakers of this Holiness*.

And thus Men, by making a good Improvement of a State of Affliction, come to be possessed of a Temper of all Virtue: For after their Acquisitions of this Sort, which have been mentioned, there can be nothing to hinder their going on to the highest Perfection. And the Habits of Virtue, which they con-

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tract, will be so confirmed, and well settled, that they will hardly be ever afterwards, broken, or altered; especially, as they acquire, in Proportion to the Improvements which they make in Virtue, a noble Firmness and Strength of Mind, an Hardiness and Courage, peculiarly necessary and useful in a militant State, which, with the Assistance, which they may always receive from God, will enable them easily to repel Temptations, and bring them off *more than Conquerors*, in any remaining Difficulties, or Dangers, which they may have to struggle with.

And during the whole Time of their Troubles and Conflicts in the World, they will *possess their Souls*, in an habitual Calmness and Serenity: *Light will arise to them in Darknes*; in the midst of the Storms, which may outwardly encompass and threaten them, they will be full of inward Peace and Tranquility; nor will the Apprehension of any distant, or future Evils, discompose and disturb them; *their Hearts*, after much Experience, being *firmly fixed trusting in the Lord*: Nay, they will count it all Joy, when

when they fall into Temptations, as they know, that thereby they will always make Acquisitions both in Virtue, and Wisdom; and may expect, that the Trial of their Faith and Patience, more precious than that of Gold, will redound to their Praise, and Honour and Glory, at the Appearing of Jesus Christ: at which blessed Time, they will obtain the fullest Consolation, and the Accomplishment of all their Hopes, and Wishes, by being received into that State, in which there will be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor any more Pain; in which God will wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and admit them to the Fulness of his Joy, and make them to drink of the River of his Pleasure, for Evermore!

Thus they, who now sow in Tears, shall certainly reap in Joy, and with inexpressible Gratitude acknowledge, that it was Good to them, that they were afflicted, and for ever adore that Providence which through much, and often great Tribulation, secured at last to them, an Entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God.

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I shall draw two or three short Inferences from what hath been delivered, and so conclude.

1. There is no Reason to raise Objections to the divine Administration with Respect to Mankind, on Account of the Distresses and Calamities, which are incident to them in this present World. Because these seem to have been necessary in any Scheme, that could have been contrived for the Benefit of Men, and are plainly calculated to serve the most excellent Purposes in regard to them, and actually yield them Advantages, which greatly outweigh any Evils, or Inconveniences, which attend them.

2. Nor in the second Place, is there any Reason to think ill of Men, merely for their being in a State of Adversity and Affliction. If any Man's Conscience, indeed, accuseth him for any gross Wickedness, and he feeleth himself to be under a severe Correction, he may, certainly, be justly alarmed, and apprehend that God is punishing him for his Sins, and giving him an earnest and solemn Call to Repentance, and ought
to



to be affected accordingly. But with Respect to his Neighbours, with the State of whose Hearts he cannot be thoroughly acquainted, he is not, from any Calamities which befall them, to judge them to be greater Sinners, than others, in the same, or the like Circumstances, and Situations with them; Nor is he to look upon their Distresses, as the Tokens of any extraordinary Displeasure of God, against them. It is certain, that Afflictions of all Kinds are *common to Men*, and that they are so far from being a certain Argument of the Hatred or Displeasure of God, that they are rather to be considered, as the Effects of his paternal Goodness and Love, and meant to prepare those on whom they fall, for a greater Happiness than they could have attained to, without them. *For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son, whom he receiveth: Happy is the Man, whom God correcteth; blessed is he, whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy Law: Blessed is the Man, that endureth Temptation: for after he is tried, he shall receive the Crown of Life.*

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3. Lastly, We should be very careful, to bear our Afflictions, with a becoming Temper, and to improve them to the Purposes, for which they are sent upon us. It is upon our acting thus, that our receiving any Benefit from our Troubles, intirely depends. *There is one Event, in many Cases, to the Righteous, and to the Wicked: It is certain, that Afflictions fall indiscriminately upon the Good and the Bad: But it is only to those, who mourn daily under them, and are properly exercised with them, that they yield any advantageous and happy Fruits. For to the Wicked, who when involved in any great Distresses, are like a wild Bull in a Net, full of the Fury of the Lord; who never seriously reflect upon their Situation, nor are careful to make the least good Improvement of it, but are agitated and driven by impetuous outrageous Passions, they are only the Means of encreasing the Insensibility and Hardness of their Hearts, and of plunging them into deeper Guilt and Misery. The like to what St. Paul said of his preaching the Gospel, that according to the different*

ferent Dispositions of the Recipients, it was either *a Savour of Life unto Life*; or *a Savour of Death, unto Death*; may be said of a State of Adversity, that according to the different Qualities of the Patients, it is either *an wholesome Medicine*, or *a deadly Poison*.

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Of the Blackness of the Teeth

Among the various causes which
conduce to the blackness of the
teeth, the most common is the
use of certain kinds of food and
drink, particularly those which
are rich in acid and sulphuric
acids, and which have the power
of dissolving the enamel of the
teeth, and exposing the underlying
dentine, which is of a dark
color, and which is the cause
of the blackness of the teeth.

S E R M O N IV.

Of the Blessedness of the Meek.

MATTHEW V. 5.

Blessed are the Meek; for they shall inherit the Earth.

AS the angry and turbulent Passions of Men, when not duly governed, are apt, not only to breed great Distraction and Confusion in the public Affairs of the World, but to have likewise a baneful Influence on the private Ease and Tranquility of the Men, who entertain them; our Saviour, in his Enumeration of the Virtues, which lay the Foundation of the Happiness of Mankind, hath, with great Propriety, mentioned *Meekness*. This is in general, the Virtue, which moderateth our angry

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gry and impatient Affections, and keepeth them within due Bounds; which preventeth their rising at all, without a just Cause, and their discovering themselves, whatever Cause may be given for them, in any unbecoming Transports and Effects. But for discerning more clearly and fully the true Nature and Extent of it, I shall consider a little its Operations, or its Effects upon our Behaviour, with respect both to God, and our Neighbours*.

1. With respect to God; the Meekness of our Temper, produceth a calm Submission to him under the Evils and Calamities, which we meet with in the World. As all these came to pass, in Consequence of his Appointment and Direction, and are all kindly intended by him, there is none, who seriously considereth this, and hath any Command of his Passions, who will not acquiesce in them, without murmuring and complaining. Indeed there cannot be a greater Indication of a turbu-

* See the Nature of Meekness, explained, in Sermon XI. of the 2d Volume of my printed Sermons.

lent,

lent, restless, and impatient Spirit, as well as of the Want of a due Reverence, for the supreme Wisdom and Excellence, than to repine at the Afflictions which come upon us, in the natural Order and Course of Things, and to censure the Dispensations of Providence, as unjust, or unkind, when Events do not always fall out according to our Desires, nor answer our Expectations. A Man of a meek composed Mind, though he will use all proper Means, for averting, or removing Calamities, yet, will be always ready to receive Evil at the Hand of God, as well as he receiveth Good; and when he smarts under the sharpest Pain, will be far from charging God foolishly; but gently resign himself to the divine Correction, supporting his Spirit with this Consideration, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him Good*: And when he is most desirous of Relief from his Afflictions, he will always ask it, with the Reserve, of its being consistent with the wise and gracious Designs of the divine Government, saying, after the amiable Example of our Saviour, *Father, if thou*

SERM. *thou be willing, remove this Cup from me ;*
 IV. *nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be*
 done.

Besides this Meekness of Temper, in regard to God, which maketh us calm and patient under the Troubles and Distresses, which he thinketh fit to send upon us in Life, some speak of a Meekness of the Understanding towards him, which they have called a *Captivation of Reason, to the Obedience of Faith*. And, if by this is meant our assenting to certain Doctrines, upon the evident Authority of God, who revealeth them, when we can form clear enough Notions of such Doctrines, though not discoverable by us, merely in the Exercise of our rational Faculties, it is certainly our Duty ; in refusing to comply with which, we shall be chargeable with great Contumacy, and Disrespect to the Fountain of all Wisdom and Truth. But if this Meekness of the Understanding, or this Captivation of it, to the Obedience of Faith, implieth a Renunciation of our Understandings, in judging of some abstruse unintelligible Doctrines, or Articles of Faith, and our professing

professing to believe, or to admit the Truth of such Doctrines, though we can have no Conceptions, or Ideas of them, or though we may, perhaps, see them, to be repugnant to the clearest Dictates of Reason; it is so far from being a Duty which we owe to God, or an Instance of our Respect to him, that it must really be deemed a profane Mockery and Contempt of him, in supposing that he could ever mean to subvert the Constitution and Order of our Nature, to blind the Guide, and to extinguish the Light of Life in us; to expose Mankind to endless Deception and Imposture, and to lay a Foundation to the Crafty, for usurping upon the Consciences of their weaker Brethren, and exercising over them, a most enormous and wicked Domination and Tyranny.

2. With Respect to Men: The Meekness of our Spirits, must produce an inoffensive Behaviour to all of them in general; and make us to promote the Harmony and Order of the Communities and Neighbourhoods, to which we belong, and the Ease and Quiet of the particular

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particular Persons, with whom we have any Intercourse. To a Man, in whom this Quality strongly prevaieth, nothing can be more harsh and disagreeable than Feuds and Factions, Contentions and Animosities, whether public or private: From every Thing of this Sort, not only a Sense of Duty, but the natural Cast of his Mind, will render him utterly averse. He will, therefore, never attempt to perplex, or disturb the Affairs of Society, from any ambitious, or interested Views of his own; nor will he be deluded into any factious Cabals, by the Artifice of those, who act from such Views: He will not give up his Judgment to any Party whatsoever; but will carefully examine their Reports, and Representations both of Persons and Things, before he suffers them to make an Impression on him; being ever ready to pay all due Respect to lawful Authority; to put a candid Construction on those Actions of his Governors, which may appear doubtful; to censure the smaller Mistakes of their Administration, with Gentleness; and to correct, and redress the more grievous

ous

ous Errors of it; if such are at any Time to be found, not in a mere Spirit of Opposition and Contradiction, but in the Uprightness of his Heart, and from a real Concern for securing and establishing the public Tranquility and Welfare. And as a Man of a meek Spirit, will thus study the Order and Happiness of the Community, of which he is Member; so will he likewise consult the Peace and Ease of the particular Persons, with whom he hath any Dealing and Intercourse, and endeavour to be on good Terms with all around him. For these Purposes, he will be extremely cautious in Points, from whence Animosities and Differences are apt to arise; such as intermeddling unnecessarily in the Affairs of others, the prying into their Secrets, the giving Ear to Calumnies and Whispers against them, and the divulging rashly what he may have heard to the Disadvantage of their Characters; and will take Care to perform the Duties, which he oweth to Men, according to their Ranks, and the several Relations and Characters, in which

SERM. which they are to be considered by
IV. him.

With Respect to his Superiors by a natural Relation, such as Parents, a Man endowed with Meekness, will behave himself towards them, with all possible Veneration, Honour, and Gratitude, and pay to them, in all lawful Things, a dutiful and affectionate Submission and Obedience: With Respect to Superiors in civil Affairs, whether supreme Governors, or subordinate Magistrates, or even ordinary Masters, a Man of a meek and peaceable Temper will reverence them on Account of the Authority with which they are invested, and readily support and assist, as far as his Ability will allow him to do so, the Fathers of their Country, and the Ministers of public Justice, in executing the Offices and Tasks committed to them for the common Good of Society, and immediately and cheerfully submit to all their unexceptionable Ordinances and Commands; and if he be a Servant, will freely pay Respect and Subjection to any Masters, which he may have, and be very faithful, zealous,

zealous, and diligent in their Service. Again, as to Superiors in great Abilities and Endowments, in a large Participation of divine Gifts and Graces, a meek and humble Man, will be so far from envying those, who are so gloriously distinguished from the rest of Mankind, that he will greatly rejoice in God's bestowing such Plenty of excellent Gift on any of them, which must redound, not only to the Benefit of their Possessors, but to the Improvement of Happiness of many others, who come within their Sphere and Influence; and will not only highly honour them, but sincerely endeavour to avail himself, as far as he hath Opportunity, of their wise Instructions, and great Examples; without however considering the very highest and best of them, as having *a Dominion over his Faith*, but regarding them only *as Helpers of his Joy*. Lastly, in Regard to Superiors in Fortune, and other external Circumstances in Life; a meek and lowly minded Man, will very readily and freely shew them all the Deference, and give them all the Precedence and Respect, which either the good Order of Society requireth, or

SERM. the common innocent Customs of the
IV. World, give them any Right to expect,
or claim from him; without grudging
them any of their Advantages, or feeling
any Uneasiness from the Inferiority
of his own Condition.

With Respect to Equals: Meekness
will make us to treat them with Affability,
Courtesy, and Modesty; to behave
ourselves towards them, with a discreet
Freedom and Openness of Spirit, and
even to submit to them, in some Cases,
for the Sake of Harmony and Peace,
when otherwise we should be under no
Obligation to do so; and not to think
ourselves injured, when one, who hath
been thought to be no more than upon
a Level with us, happeneth to be preferred
before us: being rather ready to suspect,
that we have thought more
highly of ourselves, than we ought to
think, and taking that Occasion to improve
ourselves in a Temper of Humility;
resolving never to be assuming and
insolent, or to put ourselves forward
eagerly and indecently; but to recommend
ourselves to the Notice and Approbation
of the World, only by an unaffected diligent

ligent Performance of our Duty, and not by any busy, or intemperate Display of our supposed high Merit, and great Accomplishments.

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With Respect to Inferiors ; the Meekness of our Tempers, will lead us to treat them, with Equity and Kindness, Moderation and Gentleness, Tenderness and Condescension ; will not only prevent our being imperious, haughty, and tyrannical in our Deportment towards them, but make us to take Care, that the Inconveniences and Uneasinesses attending the depressed Condition of some of them, should be felt as little as may be by them ; in exercising any Authority, which either a natural Relation, or our Station and Rank in Life, or the Superiority of our Abilities, may give us over them : if we are really possessed of the Virtue of Meekness, we shall aim, not at the Ostentation of our Power, which would argue a little and ungenerous Mind, but at the Keeping of the good Order of Society, and at the right Conduct and the true Happiness of the Persons, who are to be directed and protected by us. Thus shall we sufficiently main-

SERM. tain the Dignity of our Characters, with
 IV. Regard to those who are below us, and
 ~~~~~ at the same Time, render ourselves the  
 Objects, not of their Aversion, Distrust,  
 and Fear; but rather of their Esteem,  
 Confidence, and Love.

Again, Considering Men as our  
 Friends and Neighbours; a meek Spirit will incline and direct us, to cultivate and improve the good Understanding, which subsisteth between them and us, and to avoid whatever might occasion an Interruption of it; to guard against the Beginnings of Strife with them, and all Contests about Trifles, and Matters of mere Punctilio and Form; to bear as far as we can, with their Prejudices, Inadvertencies, and Weaknesses, and to use all the Methods of Civility, Complaisance, and prudent Condescension, for rendering the Intercourses, which we must necessarily have with one another, agreeable and easy, pleasing and delightful.

Lastly, Considering Men as our Enemies; the Meekness of our Spirits, will appear in our being slow to take Offence at them, and in neglecting, or overlooking





looking many small, or trifling Injuries, which they may do to us; and when we have sustained even the most grievous Wrongs from them, in restraining us from all Malice, Revenge, and Cruelty, from all Thoughts of Retaliation, and all Desires of returning to them Evil for Evil; and in making us to resent the Wrongs which we have received with the true Sentiments of Humanity, no farther than is here necessary for the probable Amendment of the Injuries themselves, our own Reparation and Security, and the Safety and Quiet of the Public, and to be pleased when these Ends are obtained by Methods the least distressing and painful to them; and in disposing us to forgive our greatest Enemies, and to be reconciled to them, upon any equitable Acknowledgement and Reparation, offered and made on their Part, and even willing to depart from our Right in some Instances, and to give up some Points of Form and Ceremony, rather to keep up Resentment, and to perpetuate a Quarrel. Prudence indeed must direct us, how far we are to proceed in the Concessions and Condescen-

SERM. fions, which we make to 'our Adversaries; and to make them in such a Way, as not to lay ourselves open to new Insults and Injuries, by our Lenity and Forbearance; and so, as that they may appear to flow, not from a Meanness of Mind, or the Want of Spirit, which would set us in a very low Light; but from the Goodness and Generosity of our Hearts, and our sincere Love of Peace. But with these Cautions, a Man of a meek, patient, and humble Temper, would certainly chuse to submit to some Inconveniences, rather than to live in a State of Discord and Enmity, even of Shyness and Coolness with his Neighbours.

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And thus I have explained the Virtue of *Meekness*, and shewn what the Effects of it are upon the Behaviour of Men.

I shall now consider a little the Blessing, which our Saviour hath promised to those, who practise this Virtue; which is that *they shall inherit the Earth.*

Now considering that the Temper of the Meek, doth not carry them to a  
Life,

Life of Strife and Violence, of Bustling and Struggling, large Territories, (which in the present State of the World, can hardly be obtained, without something of this Sort, except in some Cases they be bestowed by the special and extraordinary Favour of God) can scarcely be included in the Promise which is made to them: But an easy and quiet Enjoyment of the Property which they have in the Earth, without Molestation, or a Fear of being deprived of it, the Meek may very reasonably expect; both from the Care of Providence about them, and because the Temper of their own Minds, naturally tendeth to procure and secure it to them. For who will think of disturbing and hurting a Man, who is quite inoffensive and peaceable, who is an Enemy to none, but indeed a Friend to all Men; who desireth and studieth the universal Concord and Happiness of the World, and actually promoteth them, as far as his own Practice and Example can have an Influence upon them? The general Maxim of the Apostle, *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be the Followers of that which is*

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*good?* may very justly be applied particularly to the Meek. Who will injure, or knowingly incommode the Man, who deserveth well of every one, and endeavoureth to oblige all, by an universally courteous, gentle, and loving Behaviour? The Qualities conspicuous in the Meek, must readily conciliate the Goodwill and Affection of all upright and honest Men to them, and must indeed go a great Way in disarming the Malice of the Bad, and pacifying their Wrath, when threatened, or vowed against them: There are but very few, who are capable of so much Wickedness, as to persist in bearing hard upon Men, who instead of *returning Evil for Evil, and Railing for Railing*, endeavour to gain them by Acts of Complaisance and Generosity. By this Method, it is certain, that the greatest Part even of iniquitous Men will be subdued, and turn away their Anger from those against whom it was raised, and instead of continuing Enemies, will become their true Friends. The Result is, that while Men of turbulent, fierce, and implacable Tempers, are engaging in endless Quarrels,

Quarrels, and are plaguing and destroying one another ; while the Persons, *whose Hands are against every Man, and who have every Man's Hands against them,* are in Danger of being quite ruined, and extirpated from the Earth, the Man of a meek, humble, and peaceful Disposition, is like to take Root in the Earth, to escape from Trouble, even in Times of common Danger and Distress, and to enjoy Prosperity, to his full Contentment, as long as he liveth. Very justly, therefore, may we take the Advice of the *Psalmist*, and acquiesce in the Reasons, with which he supporteth it : *Cease from Anger, and forsake Wrath ; fret not thyself in any wise to do Evil. For the evil Doers shall be cut off ; but those who wait upon the Lord, shall inherit the Earth. For yet a little while, and the Wicked shall not be ; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his Place, and it shall not be found : But the Meek shall inherit the Earth, and shall delight themselves in the Abundance of Peace.*

Some indeed have thought, that this Promise of our Saviour to the Meek, extendeth much farther, than to any

Hap-



SERM. Happiness, which is to be enjoyed by  
IV. them in this World ; even to the Glory  
and Felicity of God's heavenly Kingdom. The Reasoning, however, which hath been used to support this Notion, doth not seem to be quite clear and satisfactory. But whatever cometh of the Notion, and without enquiring at all into the Truth of it, it may assuredly be affirmed, that if the Meek be intirely good and virtuous, they will not *have their good Things only in this Life* ; but that they shall hereafter obtain a more excellent Inheritance, than any that they can be possessed of on this Earth, even in *that new Heaven and new Earth*, in which Righteousness, Meekness, and Peace in Perfection, shall for ever dwell.

The Use of what hath been discoursed, is to excite us to acquire and carefully to cultivate the Virtue of Meekness ; to watch strictly over our angry and boisterous Passions, and effectually to repel and subdue them, and to work and inlay into the Constitution of our Minds, an invincible Habit of Gentleness, Patience,

tience, Humility, and Peaceableness. Thus, besides the infinite and eternal Reward, which we may expect to receive for such Virtue in another World, we shall lay a Foundation for our own great Ease and Security in this present State; shall be able to enjoy Life, in the ordinary Course of it, with Serenity, Calmness, and Contentment; and provide against the Days of Adversity and Danger, a Resource for ourselves, in the Protection of Providence, and even in the Goodwill and Favour of Men.

There are indeed several other Considerations of great Weight, to recommend the Cultivation and Exercise of the Virtue of Meekness to us: But as I have treated of these, as well as of the Ways and Means of raising and confirming a meek and quiet Spirit in us, largely and distinctly in another Place,\* I will not at all here enter upon them; but shall conclude in the Words of the Psalmist, *Come ye Children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the Fear of the Lord.*

\* See Sermon XI. in Vol. II.

SERM. *What Man is he, that desireth Life, and*  
IV. *loveth many Days, that he may see Good?*  
 *Keep thy Tongue from Evil, and thy*  
*Lips from speaking Guile: Depart from*  
*Evil, and do Good; seek Peace, and pur-*  
*sue it.*

S E R M O N

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## S E R M O N V.

Of the Blessedness of those who  
hunger and thirst after Right-  
teousness.

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MATTHEW V. 6.

*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst  
after Righteousness; for they shall be  
filled.*

**I** TOLD you, upon a former Occasion,  
that it had been remarked, that our  
Saviour, in each of his Declarations,  
concerning the Blessedness of Men, had,  
not without a peculiar Beauty and Pro-  
priety, given in the latter Part of it,  
such a Description of the Happiness  
promised in it, as correspondeth most  
aptly

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SERM. aptly with the Notion, which he had  
 V. conveyed of our Duty, in the former  
 Part of the Declaration. This, I say,  
 hath been observed, as to all the Beati-  
 tudes ; but it is more apparent in none  
 of them, than in the one which I have  
 now read, in which our Lord, maketh  
 the Happinefs of Men who *hunger and*  
*thirst after Righteousness*, to consist in  
*their being filled* ; or their obtaining the  
 Thing which they so earnestly desire,  
 and being satisfied to the Height of their  
 Wishes, in the Possession and Enjoy-  
 ment of it.

*Righteousness* is here to be taken in the  
 largest and most extensive Sense, as com-  
 prehending the Exercise of all the Dis-  
 positions and Affections that are morally  
 good, all the Virtues and Duties which  
 God has required from us, either by the  
 Laws of Nature, or that Revelation  
 which he has given us in his Word :  
 Such as Reverence, Gratitude, Affiance,  
 Resignation, and whatever else comes  
 under the Name of Piety or Devotion  
 towards God ; Probity, Truth, and  
 Charity towards our Neighbours, a Love  
 of the Public, and a Regard to the ge-  
 neral



neral and common Interests of Mankind ; Temperance and Moderation in the Indulgence of our lower Appetites and Passions, and a Cultivation of our more noble Powers and Affections, and the raising these to as high a Degree of Perfection, as we are capable of carrying them to. All these several good Dispositions uniformly and steadily exerted, come into the Nature of that Righteousness, which our Saviour here proposes as the Object of our earnest and intense Desires, or which we are *to hunger and thirst after*.

*Hungering and thirsting*, in the literal Sense, are Appetites which all are very well acquainted with, which unavoidably arise in us at certain Times, and frequently with such Force, as to exclude all Objects but those to which they tend, from our Thoughts, and to make us wholly intent on procuring their Gratification. Hunger and Thirst, being transferred from the Body to the Soul, signify its earnest and vehement Motion towards some Object that is agreeable to it, and its being disposed to do every Thing. that is necessary to attain

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tain to the Possession and Enjoyment of that Object: Particularly our *hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*, signify our intense Affection to moral Excellence, our strong Desire to acquire, and improve in all virtuous Qualities; and to perform all the Duties incumbent on us, as rational Agents, and the Subjects of God, and our doing whatever is in our Power to bring about these Purposes. This *hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*, arise from a lively Sense of the intrinsic Beauty and Worth of it, and a strong Persuasion of the infinite Importance of it to our Happiness; differing in this from the Hunger and Thirst of our Bodies, which arise previously to any Perception of Good in the Objects of them. These sensitive Appetites put us in Mind of our Wants, and without our thinking of them, powerfully solicit the Means of their Gratification: But the Hunger and Thirst of the Soul after Virtue is not perceived or felt, till the Loveliness of the Object strikes the Mind, and engages the Affection. And no sooner does the amiable Form present itself, than every uncorrupted human

*thirsting after Righteousness.*

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Heart must be charmed and captivated with it, and full of Desires and Wishes to possess it. And when besides our perceiving the highest Excellence in Virtue, we find, which, upon a little Experience and Consideration, we shall soon see to be the Case, that it is of the utmost Consequence for promoting our Happiness, both in this and a future State, all the most powerful and active Principles in our Nature must conspire and unite in the Pursuit of it, and put us upon the most vigorous Endeavours to obtain it.

*The Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness* being thus raised in us, or our Love of it being set upon this Foundation, will immediately appear in all Sorts of good Actions, as we have an Opportunity for performing them. Our Desire of Virtue, if it be genuine and sincere, will not be a silent or dormant Principle, which will be satisfied merely with contemplating the Beauty of it, going over the Theory of it, and forming fine Pictures of it in the Mind, which would go but a short Way in working it into the Temper and Com-

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plexion

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plexion of the Soul, but will exert itself in Acts upon all fit Occasions, which will gradually form a Habit of it, and render the Practice of it quite easy and agreeable to us : And it will exert itself in all the Kinds of good Acts which we are capable of performing. For though some Branches of Righteousness, are more shining and excellent in their Nature, and have a greater Influence on our Felicity than others, yet those which are of the smallest Excellence and Importance, are still of enough, to engage our sincerest Veneration and Affection. Indeed it is hardly to be conceived, that a Man who is touched with the pure Love of Virtue, and has a just Sense of its Consequence to his Dignity and Happiness, should ever be easy, while he knows that he is deficient in any one Article of it : It may certainly be expected, that he will endeavour, as St. *James* speaks, *to be perfect and entire, and wanting nothing*, as to all the essential Parts of his Duty, which is the only Ground, upon which he can reflect on himself with full Complacency and Approbation, and look

look up to his Maker and Governor with a just Confidence and Hope.

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Our *Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, will likewise appear in a serious, diligent, and uniform Use of all the Means, which are necessary or proper to strengthen and improve all righteous Dispositions and Affections in us. For though the Habits of Righteousness can arise only from the frequently renewed Acts and Exercises of it, without which the best speculative Notions and Principles, and the most regular Attendance on the outward Acts of Devotion, and the instrumental Duties of Religion, will be of no Avail for forming these Habits, or enabling us to make a Progress in any Qualities, that are really worthy and commendable; yet there are certain Means, naturally fitted to assist and strengthen the good Dispositions originally implanted in our Hearts, which, when often exerted into Acts, form and fix the Habits of Virtue in us: Such as serious Contemplations on the Nature of God, the Original and Standard of all Excellence and Worth; a lively Faith of his wise, good, and just



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Providence and Dominion, extending to all the Affairs of Mankind, both in this and another Life; humble and earnest Prayer to God; a careful reading and hearing of his Word; and partaking of the Lord's Supper with Understanding and true Devotion of Mind. These Things are plainly calculated to support and enliven us in the Exercise of our good Affections with respect both to God and Man, and to make us exert them with greater Force and Efficacy, than without their Influence we should be able to do, and are indeed so necessary to an effectual Performance of our Duty, that if they be slighted, or neglected by us, we shall certainly fail in many of the most important Branches of it. Whoever, therefore, really hunger and thirst after Righteousness, or desire to attain to the Possession of true Virtue and Goodness, must be very intent, assiduous, and constant in the Use of those Means, which are of so much Consequence for producing the End they aim at. They cannot indeed be indifferent or careless about them, or use them in a slight and superficial Way, without discovering  
very

very plainly, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, that they have no due Sense of the Excellence of Virtue, nor any just Zeal for attaining to the Practice of it. For in vain, surely, would a Man say, that he was in Earnest pursuing any Design, while he neglected, or abused, the best and most proper, and the only effectual Means to obtain it.

Lastly, our *Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, will appear in our Endeavours to attain to the highest Degrees of all virtuous Qualities of which we are capable. A Desire of Virtue, which can be fitly compared to hungering and thirsting after it, will never suffer us to be satisfied with the first Principles or Elements of it, or to rest just within the Confines or Borders of it, but will prompt us to aspire to great Improvements, and to make a constant Progress and Proficiency in it. If our Zeal for Righteousness rises no higher, than barely to have the Character of righteous Persons, and to escape at last from the Condemnation and Punishment of the Wicked, we shall probably come to find that we have no true Zeal for it at all,

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and that being lukewarm and indifferent, we are but *wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* It is certain, that a Love of Virtue, that is at all sincere, cannot but make us wish to have all that we can possess of it; and this Love, by being indulged and exerted, will become a lively and vigorous Principle, which will put us upon using the utmost Pains to open and enlarge our several Faculties, and to exercise and cultivate all our good Affections; will make us narrowly to examine our Hearts, and to search into our smallest Errors and Failings, in order to our amending them; to renew and reinforce frequently our good Resolutions, and to become more uniform and exact in our Obedience to the Command of God, and more free, liberal, and eminent in the Practice of every Virtue. In short, a sincere and strong Love of Righteousness, will make our *Path to be that of the Just, a shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.* It will indeed make us to aim at Perfection, though in this Life we shall never fully attain to it: Agreeably to the Instruction and  
Direc-



Direction of our Saviour, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*; and the Exhortation which St. Paul gives us, *Furthermore we beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more*: And the Account which the Apostle gives of his own Conduct, *not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect,—this one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth to those Things which are before, I press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Having thus shewn what is meant by *hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*, I shall now consider the Blessedness which is promised to the Persons of this Temper, which is that *they should be filled*. And this imports these two Things: 1. That they shall certainly obtain what they desire; 2. That they shall be fully pleased and satisfied in the Possession and Enjoyment of it. The Truth of which Points, I shall endeavour a little to illustrate.

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1. The Persons *who hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, shall certainly obtain the Thing which they desire. If any Thing at all be in your Power, the Acquisition of Virtue or Righteousness, undoubtedly is : For Virtue is really a Thing congenial with the human Mind, or the Result or Product of a just Exercise and Improvement of our natural Powers and Affections. So indulgent and gracious has our Creator and Law-giver been, so much has he consulted our Ease in the Obedience which he requires from us, that when he made us, he *wrote the Word of his Law in our Hearts*. He has naturally endowed us with a Sense of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, and by Means of this divine Illumination, we can easily and clearly discern all the chief Parts of our Duty ; and he has likewise given us Instincts and Propensions, which incline and determine us to the several good Acts which our Consciences approve : So that if we will but use and exercise our Faculties, according to the Intention of the Author of our Nature in bestowing them, we must necessarily attain to the Practice of Righteousness.



*thirsting after Righteousness.*

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teousness. It is certain indeed, that great Multitudes of Men lose the Advantage, which the originally good Constitution of their Nature affords them, for attaining to the Possession of Virtue, by their Inconsiderateness and Inattention, by the false, vain, and superstitious Notions and Traditions, which they suffer to possess and occupy their Minds; and, above all, by that Corruption and Depravity which they voluntarily introduce into their Hearts; in Consequence of which, they obscure the Notices of Good originally impressed upon their Consciences, suppress or pervert their generous Propensions, and instead of leading a Life of true Goodness, run into one of a quite different and opposite Character. But whoever are in Time careful to cultivate and strengthen their rational and moral Powers, and take the genuine Dictates of these Powers, together with the Bias and Tendency of their uncorrupted Affections for their Guide, will assuredly be led into a Course of all Righteousness. And even the most degenerate of Men, if they are ever by any Means awakened to Reflection, and a Desire of Reformation,

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tion, will find that there is still a Resource left to them, a Foundation laid for their Recovery and Amendment, in the unextinguished Sense of Good and Evil, which is inseparable from their Nature, which, if duly attended to, and improved, will gradually controul and subdue their evil Desires, excite and quicken their good Affections, and enable them to enter upon, and to proceed in the Ways of Righteousness. As there is, therefore, so good a Foundation laid in the Constitution of our Nature, for our attaining to the Practice of Righteousness, it is plain, that whoever are earnestly desirous of it, need not, if they faithfully endeavour after it, fear that they will be disappointed: Let them but vigorously exert their Powers in Pursuit of the End, which they have in View, and their Attempts will soon be successful. The Words of one of the Jewish Philosophers concerning Wisdom, are still more evidently true with Respect to Virtue, the Perfection and End of all Wisdom. *She is easily seen of them that love her, and found of such as seek her; she preventeth them that desire her, in making*

*thirsting after Righteousness.*

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*making herself first known unto them. Whoso seeketh her early, shall have no great Travel; for he shall find her sitting at his Doors: Whoso watcheth for her, shall quickly be without Care; for she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her, sheweth herself favourably to them in the Ways, and meeteth them in every Thought.*

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And besides this Foundation which is laid in the Frame of human Nature, for every one's arriving at the Possession of Virtue, who sincerely desires and pursues it, there is another Thing to insure Success to him in his Attempts, the divine Influence or Assistance, which will accompany his honest Endeavours to improve in Righteousness. God, who has contrived Things so, that our Dignity and Happiness result from the Practice of Virtue, and has endowed us with Faculties, which make us capable of Virtue, which is of such infinite Importance to us, takes Pleasure in our exerting our Powers, for attaining to this great End of our Being, and will not fail to direct, enliven, and support us in the Prosecution of it. He, *in whom we live, and move, and have our Being*, who  
concurr

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concur with us even in those Acts, which tend to the Preservation of our Bodies, and the good of our animal Life in this World, will still more readily concur with us, in the sublimer Acts of which we are capable, which tend to the Purification and Improvement of our Spirits, to the strengthening and adorning of our Souls, and the preparing them for the noble Exercises and Enjoyments of an immortal Existence in another World. The Possibility of God's concurring with us to these Purposes, or of his assisting us in our Endeavours to purify and perfect our Nature, consistently with the Order and Freedom of our Minds, will hardly be questioned by any Man of Reflection and Observation: And the actual Communication of his Assistance in this Case, is what might have been always expected from his Regard to Virtue, and his fatherly Tendernefs and Love towards Mankind. Accordingly it appears that several Persons among the *Heathens*, thought it extremely probable, that Men were divinely assisted in their worthy and good Actions; and from hence derived a strong  
Motive

Motive to Zeal, Earnestness, and Diligence in the Practice of Virtue. It is plain, likewise, that good Men under the *Jewish* Dispensation, had a clear Persuasion of being supported and directed by the Influence of the Divine Spirit, in a Course of Righteousness: And the Communication of the Assistance of the Holy Spirit to all Men of upright and honest Minds, is still more evident and certain under the Dispensation of the Gospel, our Saviour having expressly promised this Assistance to all who sincerely ask it, and are willing to use it for the Reformation and good Government of their Lives. This therefore being the Case, it is plain, that whoever faithfully apply themselves to the Acquisition of Righteousness, will always find Success: Though our natural Infirmary was greater than it is, and the Difficulties which lie in the Way of our performing our Duty, were more and stronger than they are, yet as we are under the Protection of infinite Wisdom and Power, we could have no Reason to despair, but might rather say with *St. Paul*, that *through him who strengthneth us, we can do*



SERM. *do all Things.* And thus we see that the  
 V. Persons *who hunger and thirst after Righteousness,* shall certainly obtain what they desire, which is the first Thing implied in the Promise of *their being filled.*

2. The second Thing included in this Promise, is, that when they have obtained this Object of their Desires, they shall be fully pleased and satisfied in the Possession and Enjoyment of it. And this is a Point, which will stand in Need of no long Proof, or Illustration, with those who have any Notion of the true Happiness of Men, and have ever experienced the Pleasures and Joys which flow from the Possession of Virtue. Whoever has at all reflected on himself, must know, that as he is susceptible of various Sorts of Pleasure, so of all the Pleasures of which he partakes, that which proceeds from the Consciousness of good Affections and inward Worth, from a Sense of having discharged his Duty, as becomes a moral Agent, and a faithful Subject of the Kingdom of God, is the most satisfactory and valuable. This is a Pleasure, which in its  
 Nature



Nature and Kind, exceeds every other Joy with which we are acquainted; as it is most pure and clear, free from all Perturbation, and every Mixture of Uneasiness; as it most sincerely and intimately affects us, running through our whole Frame, and giving us a Relish of the Dignity and Excellence of our Nature, which no other of our most pleasing Sensations yields; as it is most stable and fixed, springing up fresh and lively, upon every Reflection upon our Temper, and is ever at Hand, to give a Relish to our other Enjoyments, which without it would soon grow languid and insipid, and to support and comfort us, under the unavoidable Distresses and Pains of Life; and as it is attended with the Esteem and Love of the wiser and better Part of Mankind, and greatly increased by the most delightful Expectation of the Approbation and Favour of the Governor of the World, who is the Protector and Friend of good Men even in this Life, and will shew himself to be such still more remarkably in the next. It is this last Circumstance indeed, which compleats and perfects the Joy

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Joy and Triumph of the Righteous, which raises them far above this World, and all the fordid and low Passions and Sentiments of Men, Covetousness, and Ambition, Repining, Jealousy, and Envy; which makes them to look with Astonishment and Pity at the Conduct of deluded Mortals, in their keen Pursuits of Things, which, if obtained by them, would without Purity and Integrity of Heart, prove but the merest Dreams and Shadows, or more probably Sources of infinite Harm and Misery to them, and which in no Circumstances are necessary to the true Dignity and Happiness of Life; and which renders them always easy and contented with their outward Lot, how obscure or adverse soever it may be, *knowing*, as the Apostle speaks, *That they have in Heaven, a better and an enduring Substance.*

I shall now conclude with some few Reflections and Observations on what has been discoursed.

1. From what has been said, we may see how a Question which has been sometimes moved, is to be resolved, whether, as it is commonly expressed,  
*a Desire*

a *Desire of Grace*, meaning by this a mere Desire of it, which doth not appear, at least in any uniform Course of good Actions, *be Grace?* or, which is a more plain and intelligible State of the Question, whether a mere Desire of Virtue or Righteousness, is Virtue or Righteousness? some have been very willing, and probably with no evil Intention, to determine this Point in the Affirmative: And if it were merely a Matter of Speculation, which could have no bad Effect on the moral Behaviour and State of Men, there would be no Occasion for any Contest with them about it. But as this Determination of their's, plainly tends to make Men secure, and pleased with themselves, while they continue in a State, in which there can be no rational Safety or Peace to them at all, it may be very proper to shew, that this is not a just Decision of the Question. And this, I think, will be sufficiently evident only from attending to the figurative Allusion, or Expression of our Saviour in the Text, *hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*, in which

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the Desire of Righteousness, is as plainly distinguished from Righteousness itself, as it is implied that the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst, are distinct from the Meat and Drink which are the Objects of them. It is indeed readily granted, that a Desire of Righteousness which is sincere, is a good Beginning, and if duly cherished and strengthened, will be a Principle, from whence an actual Righteousness and Obedience to God, will in Time spring. But if it be neglected, and suffered to vanish away, without engaging us to an uniform good Course of Life, it is of no Worth or Value at all. Supposing indeed that we were placed in such Circumstances, that we had no Opportunity of practising some particular Virtues and Duties, (which probably was the Case in several Instances of the primitive Christians, who immediately upon their Conversion, suffered Martyrdom) it would be agreeable to our natural Notions of the Perfections of God, to think that in that Case he would accept of our Desire and Will to practise and perform these Virtues and Duties, as if they had been really



really practised and performed by us. But this cannot be the Case of any of us, who have been educated, or long instructed in the Knowledge of Religion, and have had all the Opportunities and Advantages which could have been desired, to act in Pursuance of their good Desires and Intentions, as to every Part of Duty. The Best that can be said of us, while we are only desirous of becoming religious, and inclining to a Course of Righteousness, is that we are entering upon a hopeful Way, in which, if we persevere with Patience and Diligence, we shall soon arrive at the End we aim at. But we must not imagine that any good Motions that we may find in our Hearts to Virtue, or any Desires or Purposes of it, will be accepted for the Thing itself. *Let no Man deceive you, saith St. John, He that doeth Righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous.* There are indeed *Babes and little Children* in Religion, as well as Men of a more full and mature Growth, and every Instance or Degree of Imperfection, is not to be severely reflected upon, or harshly reprov'd. But when

SERM. we never get beyond the first Rudiments, or the Beginnings of Piety and Holiness; when we content ourselves with idle Wishes, vain Desires, and ineffectual Resolutions of being good and virtuous, all this *Righteousness, which is but as the Morning Cloud, and the early Dew, which passeth away*, is far from being a Thing of Value in a moral Estimation, or which can turn to any good Account to us at all.

2. We may see the great and universal Goodness of God, in making Righteousness, which is productive of such high Happiness, so easily attainable by Mankind. If they but sincerely desire it, and earnestly pursue it, they cannot fail with the Assistance which they will receive from God, to obtain it. And it is in itself so lovely and divine a Form, that it must necessarily strike the Mind of every Beholder, and recommend itself to his highest Esteem and Veneration: And a Man upon very little Experience of it must find its Pleasures to be so sincere and satisfying, and so abundant and overflowing, that from a Regard to his own Interest,

terest, he must greatly desire, and eagerly pursue it. So that whoever will but exert his Powers in the Order, which the Constitution of his Nature itself points out to him, will be led to the Possession of Virtue, and will indeed find it to be the easiest and most certain of all Acquisitions. Other Things which are not so necessary to our Welfare, on which however we justly set a great Value, are not so readily and surely to be obtained. The Riches, Dignities, and Honours of this World, are seldom attained to in any eminent Degree, without great and infatigable Labour and Care, and often elude the utmost Address, Prudence, and Industry of those who pursue them. Great Skill or Mastership in the Sciences, or any of the ingenious Arts, is purchased only by close and long Study, intense Application, and constant Practice. But Virtue, which is a more inestimable Treasure than all these, which is of infinitely greater Moment to the Perfection and Felicity of our Nature, than every Thing besides that is accounted good and useful, is to be obtained by every

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One, who will use his Faculties in the Pursuit of it, with such Steadiness and Vigour, as instead of being uneasy and burthenfome, will at least in a little Time become perfectly agreeable and delightful to him. This surely is the clearest Demonstration of the universal Goodness of the Father of Mankind, towards his Children and Offspring. Whatever the Qualities he has thought fit to make among them, as to their outward Conditions and Circumstances, he has set them all upon a Level, for attaining to their true Dignity and Happiness, as rational moral Agents, having put Virtue, and even the highest Improvements in it, in the Power of Persons of the lowest Station, as well as those of the most exalted Condition, of which, if any fall short, it must be imputed only to their own Negligence and Folly, and not to any Defect in the indulgent Care and Providence of their Creator.

3. From what has been discoursed, we may see that there is a clear Foundation laid for the Exercise of Virtue, from a Regard to Reward of it, without

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an Imputation of being influenced by a mercenary or servile Spirit. For as the Reward of an earnest Desire of Virtue, and of cultivating and improving a virtuous Temper in Consequence of that Desire, consists in *being filled* with Virtue itself, and the Pleasures which naturally and necessarily flow from the Consciousness and Practice of it, it is plain that a Regard to this, is so far from being a mean and low Principle of Action, that on the contrary, it is one of the most noble and sublime Principles on which a Man can conduct himself, worthy of the most ingenuous and heroick Spirits, who disdain to be either bribed, or awed to their Duty, or to perform it upon any but the most generous Motives. A Mind in which the Ideas of Excellence and Dignity of Nature, of inward Beauty and Worth and of becoming and orderly Affections are always uppermost, in which the Love of the moral Charm prevails above all other Passions, will in acting from a View to this Reward of Righteousness, find full Scope given to its most great and noble Efforts, and will be most



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agreeably led on from inferior Degrees of Virtue to higher Attainments in it, and a nearer Resemblance of the most glorious and excellent of all Beings, who having the Standard of Goodness in himself, forms his whole Conduct, according to the most perfect Rules and Measures of it.

4. Lastly, the Consideration of the Greatness and Certainty of the Reward of desiring and pursuing Righteousness, should engage us to the most careful Study and Practice of it. As this Reward includes in it, whatever is most truly good and honourable, and whatever is most joyous and delightful, if we have either any Generosity of Mind, or any rational Concern for ourselves, we shall be above all Things fond of obtaining it. And as we cannot fail to obtain it, if we set ourselves in earnest to seek it, if we have any Prudence, we must lay out our Pains and Care in the Way, in which we know they will turn to the best and most certain Account to us. When we pursue the Advantages and Enjoyments of this World, at the Expence of so much Time,

Time, and Labour, and Trouble, as we commonly do, we frequently meet with sad Disappointments, and find that the Things which we so ardently wish for, are not to be obtained by us: and when we have obtained some of them, we are often frustrated in our Hopes, and find, in the Language of the Prophet, that we have *spent our Money for that which is not Bread, and our Labour for that which satisfieth not.* Virtue, as it is the highest so it is the only sure, permanent, and constant Good. I shall conclude all, with the Words of Solomon, in the Recommendation of *Wisdom*, which in his Sense, and according to the Interpretation of the Scripture itself, is the same with Righteousness: (*For unto Man he said, behold the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*) *Wisdom*, says Solomon, *is the principal Thing, therefore get Wisdom, and with all thy getting, get Understanding. Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding. For the Merchandise of it, is better than the Merchandise of Silver, and the Gain there-*  
of.

SERM. *of, than fine Gold. She is more precious*  
V. *than Rubies: and all the Things which*  
 *thou canst desire, are not to be compared*  
*unto her. Length of Days is in her*  
*right Hand, and in her left Hand, Riches*  
*and Honour. Her Ways are Ways of*  
*Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace.*  
*She is a Tree of Life to them that lay*  
*hold upon her, and happy is every one*  
*that attaineth her.*

S E R M O N

## S E R M O N VI.

Of the Blessedness of the Merciful.

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MATTHEW V. 6.

*Blessed are the Merciful; for they shall  
obtain Mercy.*

**A**S the Exercise of Mercy, is a most SERM.  
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plentiful Spring of the purest  
Pleasure, to those who accustom them-  
selves to it, and likewise a certain  
Means of recommending them to the  
Mercy and Love of God; it might  
justly be expected, that our Saviour  
would not omit to mention this Virtue,  
among those, which lay the Founda-  
tion of the Happiness of Mankind?  
And he hath indeed mentioned it, very  
remarkably and emphatically, in the  
Words

SERM. Words of the Text : *Blessed are the*  
 VI. *Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.*



In discoursing upon which, I propose to do these three Things.

I. To explain the Character of the Persons whom our Saviour here pronounceth *blessed, the Merciful.*

II. To consider the Argument, or Proof of their Blessedness ; because *they shall obtain Mercy.*

III. To recommend the Practice of Mercy, from the Consideration of this Blessedness which attendeth it, and by some other proper Motives and Arguments.

I. I shall explain the Character of the Persons, whom our Saviour here declareth to be blessed, *the Merciful.* The Merciful in general are those, who carefully cultivate the Virtue of Mercy in their Hearts, and exert it, upon all fit Occasions, according to their best Abilities, in their Life, or Practice in the World. And as Mercy is that Affection of the Mind, which melteth us into  
 • Tenderneſs for the miserable and distressed, and maketh us to do whatever we can, to relieve, support, and comfort,



fort them; in the Character of the Merciful, these following Particulars are comprehended.

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I. An inward Sense and Feeling of the Afflictions and Calamities of others, and a true Sympathy with them therein. And this Humanity itself suggesteth to us. It is wrought into the very Frame of our Nature, and there is scarcely any one, who can so far corrupt himself, as to extinguish it wholly in him. And this is the Root, from whence the several Branches of Mercy, in our Intercourse and Dealing with our Neighbours, must shoot forth and grow; otherwise they will have no Virtue in them, nor will they be in the least regarded by God. St. Paul assureth us, that though *we bestow all our Goods to feed the Poor, yet if we have not Charity, if we have no Concern for their Misery, nor Affection to them in our Hearts, it will profit us nothing.* And therefore, in his Exhortations to this Virtue, he calleth upon us, to *put on Bowels of Mercies; to weep, with those who weep; and to be kind, and tender hearted one to another.* And God teacheth us by his own Example,

1 Cor. xiii.  
3.

SERM. Example, that our Tenderneſs, or Pity  
VI. to the Diſtreſſed, is the firſt Step that  
we take in ſhewing Mercy to them. Is

Jer. xxxi.  
20.

*Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleaſant Child? For ſince I ſpoke againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill! therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will ſurely have Mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.* Agreeably to which, the Prophet *Iſaiah*, in the Name of the Jewish People, addreſſeth himſelf thus to God: *Where is thy Zeal and thy Strength, the Soundings of thy Bowels, and thy Mercies towards me, are they reſtrained?*

Iſa. lxiii.  
15.

2. A ſecond Thing included in the Character of the Merciful, is, that they are ready to afford all the Aſſiſtance and Relief in their Power, to thoſe who are in Miſery, or in Danger of it. The Exerciſe of this Branch of Mercy, is very large and comprehensive, the Aſſiſtance and Relief which we are to give to Perſons in ſuch Circumſtances, being as various, as the Miſeries and Dangers are, in which they may happen to be. Theſe will in different Ways, affect either their Souls or Bodies; and ſo Help and Relief muſt reach to either, as there

is

is Necessity ; and appear in all those Instances, whereby we may promote either the spiritual, or temporal Good of our unhappy Brethren, and deliver them either from present, or from future Misery.

To instruct the Ignorant, to direct the Simple ; to reclaim those, who are engaged in evil Courses, by good Counsels, seasonable Advices, and prudent and friendly Reproofs ; to restore those who are fallen, in the Spirit of Meekness ; to support the Weak, and to comfort the Melancholy and Dejected, are Acts of Mercy, which are due to unhappy Souls : And they are indeed the noblest and most beneficial Expressions of it ; because they are conversant about the better and more excellent Part of Man, and tend to deliver him from the greatest Evils, from Sin, Disquiet of Mind, and everlasting Misery.

Again : To visit the Sick ; to defend the Fatherless and Oppressed, and to help them to their Right ; to cloath the Naked ; to give Meat to the hungry, and Drink to the thirsty ; to redeem the Captives, and to release the Imprisoned ;

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to vindicate those, who are injured in their Persons, or in their Credit; to repair the Fortunes of such, as from Plenty are fallen into Want, by communicating willingly to them, of our own Substance, and *lending them freely, not for Increase, but in Charity, hoping for nothing again;* and by discharging them, if they be our Debtors, of all such Payments, as cannot be expected but by Severities, which must entirely ruin them; to give Warning to those, who are like to be ensnared by crafty Men, and to apprize them of approaching Evils: These are some of the Branches of Mercy, which we owe to our unfortunate Brethren, with respect to their temporal Concerns.

This Assistance and Relief of others in Misery and Danger, is the most substantial Expression of Mercy, which we can shew to them; and without this, all other Acts of it, will signify but little. It would be but a poor empty Compliment to unhappy Men, to tell them, that we truly pity their Case, and wish them very well, while yet in the mean Time, we do not in the least put out  
our

*See flyleaf*

our Hand to help them, when we can easily do it. St. *John* cautions us against such a superficial Way of expressing our Kindness to our Brethren, and exhorts us to make it appear in more real and solid Effects. *My little Children, let us not love in Word, and in Tongue, but in Deed, and in Truth.* And St. *James* teacheth us the Vanity and Unprofitableness of it: *If a Brother, or a Sister, be naked, and destitute of daily Food, and one of you say unto them, depart in Peace, be ye warmed, and be ye filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those Things, which are needful to the Body, what doth it profit?* Such fair Speeches are of no Use to unhappy Men, nor do they prove us to be Persons of an humane and benign Disposition: The Principles of Compassion and Charity, must have but very little Force in our Hearts, when the utmost Effects of them, consist in good Words, and they do not appear in those kind and beneficent Actions, which we have Opportunity and Ability for performing.

1 John iii.  
18.

am. ii.  
15, 16.

3. Another Part of the Character of the Merciful, is to pray for those, who

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labour under Misery and Trouble. In some Cases, it is not at all in our Power to help them; and in others, where we can help them in some Measure, we cannot yet give them full Relief, God alone is able to give such Supports and Assistances, as are suitable to all their Calamities. And he *is the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort: He is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* It is therefore a very proper and becoming Expression of our Mercy, to our miserable Neighbours, to recommend them heartily in our Prayers to Him, who is both able, and disposed to relieve his suffering Creatures; beseeching him to grant them Deliverance from their Afflictions, or such Supports and Consolations under them, as we cannot afford. What the Effect of our Intercessions for others will be in particular Cases, we cannot say: But as we know in general, that God hath a Regard to the Prayers of all good Men, and they may be the Means of procuring the Afflicted and Distressed a great deal of Good, we should offer them up, with all Fervency and Affection, in their



their Behalf. This is at least an Instance of Mercy, which, whether it avail-eth the unhappy Sufferers, or not, will not fail to be graciously accepted at our Hands, by our heavenly Father.

4. The last Thing included in the Character of the Merciful, is that they are always disposed to forgive the Injuries and Offences, which others do to them. As for Persons invested with civil Power, Magistrates, and the Ministers of public Justice, they indeed, are in no Cases, to suffer great and notorious Offenders, to escape with Impunity; nor any Offenders, without a Chastisement, proportioned to their Crimes; as the contrary Conduct would be to counteract the Design of their Office, and a Thing of most pernicious Consequence to the World: Yet, there is a Lenity very becoming their Characters, consisting in their moderating the Rigour of Justice, by the Principles of Equity; in not proceeding to extreme Severity, when lower Degrees of it, will answer all the salutary Purposes of Law and Government; and in distinguishing duly the Crimes, which come under their

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Cognizance, from one another; such, as may be supposed to proceed chiefly from Inadvertence and human Frailty, and are attended with extenuating Circumstances, from those, which plainly arise from deliberate Villainy, and are flagrant and highly aggravated Offences; and in apportioning Correction and Punishment accordingly. Nor, must we in a private Capacity, in all Cases, suffer ourselves to be injured in our Characters and Properties, without taking proper Measures for restraining the Insolence of those who abuse us, and making up what Damages we sustain by them. This would be but an ill-judged Clemency, and very hurtful, not only to ourselves, but to the Public. But we must never be cruel, or revengeful; nor take Pleasure in the Losses and Sufferings of our Enemies: We must still be desirous of the true Happiness of those who offend us, bear with them as long as we can, and even when we may be obliged to prosecute them at Law, for their Injustice, must treat them with the utmost Fairness and Candour, and with all the Gentleness and Moderation, that  
the

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the Circumstances of the Case will admit of; and must be ever ready to receive them into our Favour and Friendship again, when they have given sufficient Evidence of their Reconciliation to us, and of their Repentance for the Evils which they have done to us. That this Forgiveness of Injuries, is necessarily required of the Merciful, is evident from this Consideration, that when the Apostles exhort us to Mercy, they either expressly mention, or plainly refer to this Forgiveness, as a main Instance of it. Thus St. Paul, *Put on, therefore, as the Elect of God, Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, for bearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any one hath a Quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And be ye kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you.* After the same Manner, St. Peter, *Be ye all of one Mind, having Compassion upon one another; love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering Evil, for Evil; nor Railing, for Railing; but contrariwise Blessing.* And our Saviour himself lets

Col. iii.  
12, 13.

Eph. iv.  
32.

1 Pet. iii.  
8, 9.

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Luke vi.  
27—35.

us know, that a forgiving Temper, and our abstaining from Revenge, are essential to Mercy; when having in the sixth Chapter of *St. Luke*, given us several Precepts, relating to these Things, he at last summeth them all up in these Words: *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

Having thus explained the Character of the Persons, whom our Saviour declareth to be blessed,

II. I shall next consider the Argument, or Proof of their Blessedness; because *they shall obtain Mercy.*

And this they may expect to obtain, both in this World, and in the next.

I. In this present World. Though it must be owned, that merciful and good Men, may sometimes fall into particular Evils and Troubles, or, that they may be involved in a common Calamity, yet they of all Men, are most likely to have a prosperous Life upon Earth, and to enjoy Plenty of outward Blessings. Many are the Promises of temporal Happiness, which are in Scripture made to Persons of this Character, as that they shall be protected in Times of Distress and





and Danger; that their Fortunes shall be increased, and their Families built up, and established. The Passages containing these Promises, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are various and well known; and though it is certain, that the compassionate and good under the Old Testament Dispensation, had greater Reason to look for these Advantages, than we now have under the Gospel, when the Rewards promised to Religion, are not so much the good Things of this World, as eternal Life and Happiness in the next: Yet, notwithstanding this, Mercy, as an eminent Branch of *Godliness*, or true Religion, hath still *the Promise of the Life, which now is, as well as of that, which is to come.* And agreeably to the Declarations and Promises of Scripture, the Divine Providence, doth many Times, actually concern itself remarkably in Behalf of the Merciful, delivering them from many Evils to which others are exposed, making them to live easily in the World, and giving them a great Prosperity in all their Affairs. And besides the Security which the Merciful have, for their obtaining the outward

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Mercies and Comforts of Life, from the Promise of God, they have also a farther Security for it in the very Nature of Things. Their Mercy and Goodness make Way for their own Reward among Men: Nothing indeed raiseth us up so many Friends, who will be heartily concerned for our Interest, and zealous in promoting it, and who will stand by us, in our greatest Dangers and Troubles, as the Exercise of these Virtues. *For a good Man, saith the Apostle, for one who is of a compassionate and charitable Disposition, and who hath been eminently useful and serviceable to the World, one would even dare to die. Give, saith our Saviour, and it shall be given to you, good Measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall Men return into your Bosom.* So that whoever aboundeth in Acts of Mercy, and letteth himself out into the *Labours of Love*, may all the while he is doing so, have a secret Confidence in himself, that they shall return upon him, one Way, or another; that a Requital shall be made to him, if not by those, from whom it might with the greatest Reason be expected,

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pected, yet by some Hand, or other. SERM.  
For this, one may in general, depend VI.  
not only on the Providence of God, but  
even on the Equity and Generosity of  
Mankind.

2. The Merciful shall obtain Mercy in the World to come. And there indeed they shall partake of it, without Measure, and without End : God will there scatter abroad all the Treasures of his Goodness, among those, who in this World, have been compassionate and kind to others.

The Merciful, in the other World, shall obtain the Forgiveness of all their Sins. Though this Instance of Mercy be really granted to them in this Life, yet, because it will yet be judicially declared before they may appear at the Tribunal of God, it is most proper to consider it under this Head. *By Mercy and Truth, their Iniquity will be purged. Their Charity will cover a Multitude of Sins. Because they forgave others their Trespases, their heavenly Father will also forgive theirs.* And herein the Greatness and Fulness of the Mercy of God, towards them, will appear ; in his *forgiving them*  
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*ten thousand Talents, for their forgiving an hundred Pence to those who were indebted to them ; in his acquitting them of an immense Sum of Debt, for their exercising a little Patience, Gentleness, and Forbearance towards their Brethren.*

The Merciful in the other World, shall likewise obtain a Freedom from all Evils and Miseries, and be made Partakers of the Riches and Glories of God's heavenly Kingdom. Because they made it their Business to relieve and deliver those, who were here under any Kind of Misery, God will at last grant them a perfect Deliverance from all the Calamities, which might at any Time have befallen them in this frail and miserable State ; because they were liberal in bestowing the good Things of this World, upon those, who stood in Need of them, *drawing out their Soul to the Hungry, and satisfying the afflicted Soul ; because they made Feasts to the Poor, the Maimed, the Lame, and the Blind, who could give them no Recompence,* God will shew them the greater Abundance of his Mercy and Grace, and make them a most glorious  
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Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just; which will abundantly compensate their Losses, supply their Wants, and satisfy the most enlarged Desires of their immortal Souls. Whoever is acquainted with the New Testament, cannot but know, that the great Promise of eternal Life and Happiness, is in a particular Manner entailed upon the Practice of Mercy and Charity. Give Alms, provide yourselves Bags which wear not old, a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not. Let us not weary in Well-doing; for in due Season, we shall reap, if we faint not. Charge them, who are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God; that they do Good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life. But Beloved, we are persuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation; for God is not unrighteous to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have shewed towards his Name, in that ye have mini-

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stered to the Saints, and do minister. Then shall the King say unto them, on his right Hand; Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; I was in Prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the Righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee Drink? when saw we thee a Stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or, when saw we thee sick, or in Prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it to me. From these Passages, it is abundantly evident, that the Merciful shall be particularly regarded by God, in the other World, and share in a high Degree, of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven.

But still we must take Care, not to understand this so, as if the Persons, who

who only do some Acts of Kindness to their Brethren, while at the same Time they are grossly defective in some other essential Parts of their moral and christian Duty, can justly expect to partake of the divine Favour. A Christian, as I have formerly observed, must be perfect, and entire, and wanting nothing, in any of the substantial Parts of Virtue, in order to his being accepted in the Judgment of God. Perhaps, indeed, Mercy may go as far as any single Virtue can go, in recommending a Man to God; and if we can suppose, which can hardly indeed be supposed, that one, who hath practised it sincerely, should, for Want of other necessary Parts of Perfection, fall in the last Judgment, his Fall will be easier, and his Punishment lighter, upon the Account of it. But neither it, nor any single Virtue, separated from other Virtues, is sufficient to intitle us to the Mercy and Forgiveness of God. And therefore the Meaning of the Promise of Mercy and of Happiness in the World to come, which is made to the Merciful, is, that because in Conjunction with the other Virtues of Religion,

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ligion, they have eminently exercised this, God will surely at last have Mercy upon them, and will, in a special Manner, have Respect to the Work and Labour of Love, which they have shewn to their miserable Brethren: As they have expressed their Mercy and Favour to those who stood in Need of them, he will express much greater Instances of his divine Compassion and Love to them.

III. I shall now recommend the Practice of this Virtue of Mercy, from the Blessedness which attends it, and by some other proper Motives and Arguments.

I need not insist long upon the Argument, which ariseth from the Blessedness, which we see attendeth this Virtue; and from that inward Pleasure, which, over and above all the other Instances of Happiness which it conferreth, it always affordeth; a Pleasure, certainly, the most clear and pure, the most sincere and satisfying, the most joyous and delightful, of any with which we are acquainted; and which will spring up fresh and lively in us, upon

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a Remembrance of our humane and charitable Deeds, even when the Power and Opportunity of repeating them may be gone ; and which will wonderfully soothe and comfort us, under the Afflictions of Life, the Infirmities of Age, and at the Approaches of Death, when nothing without in this World, will have any Relish, or can be of Use to support and comfort us at all. I need not, I say, enlarge upon this Argument, for engaging us to Mercy ; as I have, upon other Occasions, sufficiently illustrated it, and as there is scarcely any one, who will not be sensible of the Force of it. Even those Persons, who have but little, that is ingenuous and generous, or that is great and noble in their Nature, who are almost wholly governed by their selfish Appetites and Passions, will, from a Prospect of the great Advantages of Mercy, become desirous of exercising it : When they see, that by endeavouring the Deliverance, and consulting the Welfare of their distressed Neighbours and Brethren, they most effectually secure and promote their own truest and highest Felicity, the Love which they bear

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bear to themselves, will naturally determine them to relieve, and to do Good to those, who want their Assistance; and perhaps render them solicitous, to acquire, in the Use of all proper Means, a sincere Temper of Humanity and Goodwill towards them.

But besides this Argument there are some others, of great Weight, which recommend the Practice of Mercy to us, and which will not fail to have a just Influence upon every ingenuous and well-disposed Mind. But neither shall I dwell upon these Arguments; as I have at other Times, in discoursing upon Subjects related to the present, distinctly, and at large, explained and laid them before you;\* I shall now only briefly touch upon some of the principal Motives, for exciting and urging us to the Practice of Mercy, which are fitted for working upon our Affections, of the more noble and better Kind, and which at the same Time, are some of the most powerful Principles of Action in our Nature.

\* See particularly Sermon on 1 Cor. XIV.



1. Let us consider, that from the Frame and Constitution of our Beings, we are determined, or strongly inclined to Acts of Compassion and Beneficence. There is, certainly, something in our Nature, which, if it be not depraved, or altered for the worse, rendereth us obnoxious to the Pains of others, maketh us to feel for them, to sympathize with them, and to exert ourselves, if it be in our Power, to relieve and support them. This is a Fact so obvious and certain, that it is not to be denied. We cannot, therefore, act a positively cruel, or malicious Part, or even neglect any Office of Mercy and Kindness in our Power, towards the distressed and suffering Part of Men, without contradicting those Propensions and Inclinations, which are essential to our Beings; nay, not without in some Measure, putting off Humanity, and degenerating into another Sort of Creatures, than we were at first intended for; and without disregarding a Demand, which our Creator hath plainly made upon us, in Behalf of our Neighbours, in our original Constitution.

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2. Let us consider, that the Circumstances and Condition of Mankind, require the Exercise of Compassion and Charity towards one another. Such is the State and Constitution of the World, that Men cannot live happily, without a Circulation of good Offices, and mutual Assistances. There are but very few, if any at all, who can make their Way through the various Parts of Life, without encountering Dangers, and suffering many Evils. Even those, who enjoy the greatest Prosperity in some Instances, are often most unhappy in others, and are still liable to be deprived of all that Prosperity, which they are possessed of; and must ever be necessarily indebted for the Supply of several Wants, and for many Enjoyments, to the Humanity and Goodness of their Fellows. Man appeareth plainly to be a necessitous and indigent Creature: And however difficult it may be, to account for all the Reasons of our being placed in our present Condition, yet, since we are placed in it, by the Will of an infinitely wise and good Being, it is not to be doubted, but that it is on the whole

whole the best for us, and that very good Ends are obtained by it; among which, this seemeth to be one of the most considerable and important; that we have hereby an Opportunity of expressing the Affections of Tenderness and Love to our Kind, which our wise and good Creator hath implanted in our Hearts. It is certain, that the State in which we are, layeth us under a Necessity of exerting these Affections, with great Attention and Diligence; as the Exercise of them is plainly necessary for rendering this present State supportable and desirable, and Life a Blessing to Mankind.

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3. Let us now attend to the Amiability and Excellence of the Virtues of Mercy and Charity. These are Things, which are most truly lovely, and of good Report; which our Consciences must necessarily approve of, and which, when strongly displayed in the Conduct of any one, never fail to procure to him, the Esteem and Veneration of the World. They are indeed Qualities of a native and genuine Worth, and shine with their own Charms; which greatly improve

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and adorn our Nature, dignify and exalt our Characters, and raise us to the most noble Sublimity, to an Imitation and Resemblance, the nearest that we can have, of the superior Beings of the Universe; of the holy Angels, whose great Honour and Happiness consist in their being *ministering Spirits* for the Good of Beings below them; of our blessed Saviour, who left *the Bosom of the Father*, and lived and died upon Earth, from a Principle of Compassion and Love to a perishing World; and of the infinitely perfect Being himself, whose highest Glory resulteth from the Emanations of his Goodness, diffused and scattered throughout the whole Creation.

4. I shall in the next Place, take Notice, how much Religion is concerned in Works of Mercy; that these are indeed essential to it, and that without them, it is only an empty and insignificant Name. There is every where in Scripture, the greatest Stress laid upon the Acts of Mercy. Under the Old Testament, God preferred them to all positive Duties, and to all the instituted

instituted Parts of his own Worship. *I* SERM.  
*desired Mercy, and not Sacrifice*; saith VII.  
God, by the Prophet *Hosea*. And  
*Isaiah* teacheth the *Jews*, that the out- If. lviii. 5.  
ward Expressions of their Piety and  
Devotion, their Fasting and Humilia-  
tion would signify nothing at all to  
them, except they were accompanied  
with Alms-giving, and other Acts of  
Charity, and that these were the  
Things, which render their Devotions  
acceptable, and recommend themselves  
to the Favour of God. The Prophet  
*Jeremiah* telleth us, that *Loving-kind- Jer. lx. 24.*  
*ness*, or Compassion and Goodness to  
Mankind, is a Thing, in which *the*  
*Lord doth delight*. And *Micah*, sum- Micah vi.  
ming up the Particulars, in which true 8.  
Religion mainly consisteth, giveth us  
this Account of them: *He hath shewed*  
*thee, O Man, what is good, and what*  
*doth the Lord require of thee, but to do*  
*justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly*  
*with thy God.*

And in the New Testament, it is  
evident that the greatest Regard is had  
to Mercy and Charity. These are Du-  
ties of the first Rank and Order in the



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Christian Religion. The great Design of the Gospel, indeed is to inspire us with Sentiments of Tenderness and Kindness to all Mankind, to make us to study every one's Happiness, and to do what we can to promote it. And it is very observable, that when the Apostles professedly define Christianity, and have a Mind to let us into the most just, and precisely true Notion of it, they describe it by such Characters and Properties, as plainly declare it to be of a most compassionate and benign Tendency. Thus St. James, telleth us, *that pure Religion and undefiled before God, is this: to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the World. And that the Wisdom which is from above, and which is inspired into Men, by Christianity, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of Mercy, and all good Fruits.* When St. Paul giveth an Account of the Fruits of the Spirit, or of those Virtues which are produced in them, by the Christian Dispensation, he mentions Love and Goodness in the first Place. *The Fruit of the Spirit is Love.*

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*The Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth. St. John likewise maketh Compassion and Beneficence to our distressed Brethren, the Mark of our being in a State of Grace and Salvation, without which we cannot be thought to have any true Principles of Love to God and to Religion, in us. Whoso hath this World's Goods, and seeth his Brother have Need, and shutteth up the Bowels of his Compassion for him, how dwelleth his Love of God in him? Our Saviour himself hath told us, that Mercy is one of the weightier Matters of the Law; and hath declared that our omitting the Acts of it to his indigent Members, is an Evidence that we have no sincere Regard and Love to himself; and hath assured us, that the great Matter of Inquiry in the last Judgment will be the Works of Mercy, according to the Performance, or Neglect of which, the final State of Men will be fixed and determined. Let us not then deceive ourselves; it is not our going through a Course of Piety, with great Appearances of Mortification and Humility, nor our attending*

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upon the Institutions of the Gospel, with the utmost Diligence; it is not our affecting the Sublimity of Devotion, nor our eager contending for the Purity of the Faith, nor all the Heat and Zeal that we can spend upon the Controversies of Religion, that will prove us to be possessed of the true Spirit of Christianity: We must give a more real and substantial Evidence of this, by being compassionate and kind, useful and beneficial to all, who stand in need of our Assistance.

5. I shall, in the last Place, only mention the great Example of Mercy, which the Scripture setteth before us, and proposeth to our Imitation; the Examples of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is said to be *full of Compassion*. He is styled by St. *John*, *Love itself*. He is an infinite inexhaustible Fountain of Goodness, who is kind to all, and whose tender Mercies are over all his Works. As to Mankind, he created them at first with an Intention to make them happy; and he preserves them in Being for no other Reason, than that he may continue to do

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do them Good ; as is clear from the whole Course of his Administration towards them. And ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our Sakes, he became poor ; that he left his original Glory, and came into the World upon the most merciful and gracious Design, the freeing us from a State of Sin and Misery, and the restoring us to a Capacity of attaining to the highest Perfection and Happiness, and prosecuted it with the most unwearied Pains and Diligence ; and that in his ordinary Conduct in Life, he sought for Opportunities of exercising his Mercy and Goodness, and actually dispensed all Manner of Blessings to a sinful and unhappy World. And now is it not most reasonable, that we should conform ourselves to these most excellent Patterns ? That we should express our Veneration, for the God, whom we serve and honour, by resembling him, as nigh as we can, in his Perfections, and imitating him in those Actions, in which he takes the greatest Delight ? And that we should take our Impressions of Virtue and Goodness, from the Di-

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vine Author of our Religion, and the great Master and Instructor of Christians? Our Saviour calleth upon us to imitate God, and him, in Acts of Compassion and Love. *Be ye perfect, as your Father, who is in Heaven, is perfect. Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Love one another, as I have loved you. I have given you an Example, that ye should do, as I have done to you.*

I shall offer nothing more in the Way of Argument, to perswade and engage us to the Exercise of Mercy. The Considerations which been proposed, must, if duly attended to, have Force enough, for working upon all Persons, of any Ingenuity of Mind, and Tendernefs of Affection, and determining them to a chearful and zealous Performance of this Duty.

And if any of us are really disposed to practise this Duty, we may facilitate the Performance of it to ourselves, by observing these following Directions.

1. By considering that the meanest, and lowest, and most miserable Objects of our Mercy, stand in the nearest Relation, and closest Union to us: That

we



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we and they are Brethren, not only as we are all the Children of *one Father*, and as we all partake of *that one Blood*, of which God hath made all Nations; but in a more special and peculiar Sense, as we are all the Children of God, through the Faith that is *Jesus Christ*; as we are all born of *one holy Spirit*, and are all Heirs of the same heavenly Inheritance; and as we are all *one Body*, and every one Members one of another. A just and lively Sense of this, must, surely endear all, who partake of human Nature, and belong to the Body of Christ, greatly to one another; and make every one ready and forward in his Station, to contribute what he can to the common Good, and particularly to the Relief and Support of his indigent and distressed Brethren.

2. By accustoming our Minds to frequent and attentive Meditations on the infinite Goodness of God, which gave Being to the Universe, and is still, the Support and Life of it; which is the Refuge and Resource of the unhappy, and the Spring of all the Joy and Satisfaction, which any Men do, or can partake of. This, as it is the most agreeable

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agreeable Object, which can possibly be presented to the Mind, so while we attend to it, we cannot but admire and love it, and be earnestly desirous to have such an amiable Quality raised and heightened in ourselves; and especially, when in the solemn Acts of our Devotion and religious Meditation, we set ourselves to consider the various Instances of the Divine Favour, and particularly the Benefits which Mankind, and we ourselves have received from it, the Goodness of God, cannot but make the deepest Impressions on us, at once filling us with the sincerest Gratitude and Love to him, and disposing us to an Imitation of this Perfection of his, which we so delightfully contemplate, and which is fruitful of so much Joy and Comfort to us. Indeed, one of the greatest Advantages, which we receive from the Practice of Devotion, and serious Meditation, is that it improveth our Tempers, and maketh us like to that merciful and good Being, whom we adore and worship. And if we are frequently careful by this Means, to correct and amend our Hearts, we shall

shall come at last, to have an immovable Habit and Temper of Goodness formed in us. This will become the prevailing Affection of our Souls, and subdue all other Affections to it.

Lastly, by guarding against the prevalence of all immoderately selfish Passions, and of all angry, peevish, discontented Humours and Dispositions in us; and endeavouring as much as we can, to preserve ourselves, in a serene, unruffled, and calm State of Mind: And thus, when all those Things, which are the greatest Obstacles to the Exercise of our Humanity and Benevolence are removed, and we are in such a Disposition as rendereth us fit to attend to the Condition of others, and to be affected with it, a Temper of Mercy and Charity can hardly fail to grow in us, and to influence our whole Behaviour.

S E R M O N VII

Of the Bleedings of the pure  
in Heart

MATTHEW V. 8

Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.

**B**Y the various Qualifications  
which a Person of Bleedings  
here annexed, some understand in  
vertical Redundance of Life, and Man  
And without doubt the Practice of  
Virtue, is the proper Fruit of  
of the inward Purity, which con  
here speaketh of, and is the  
Nature is strictly connected with  
the inward Purity, which con

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## S E R M O N VII.

Of the Blessedness of the pure  
in Heart.

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MATTHEW V. 8.

*Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they  
shall see God.*

**B**Y the virtuous Qualification, to which a Promise of Blessedness is here annexed, some understand an universal Rectitude of Life, and Manners: And without doubt, the Practice of all Virtue, is the proper Fruit, or Effect of the inward Purity, which our Lord here speaketh of, and in the Order of Nature, is strictly connected with it. But as in all the other Beatitudes, our Saviour

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SERM. Saviour fixeth upon some particular  
 VII. Virtue, or some one morally good Qua-  
 lity, and layeth it as the Foundation  
 of the Happiness, which he promiseth  
 to it, and for partaking of which, it  
 peculiarly fitteth and preparateth Men,  
 so, in the Way of Analogy, it may be  
 thought, that the Purity, which he  
 here mentioneth, is to be taken in a  
 more restrained Sense, than signifying  
 moral Virtue or Righteousness, that  
 large; but which still hath a natural  
 Tendency, or particular Efficacy, to  
 make Men capable of the Felicity here  
 promised, *the Vision of God*; not to bring  
 them to a clear Knowledge, and full En-  
 joyment of him, *their Hearts and Minds*  
 Purity, when applied to Things of  
 a spiritual and moral Nature, is a me-  
 taphorical Word, transferred from ma-  
 terial and sensible Objects. And, by  
 considering upon what Accounts out-  
 ward and sensible Things are said to be  
 pure, we may form a true Judgment  
 of that Purity, which is frequently as-  
 cribed to the Hearts, Minds and Con-  
 sciences of Men. Now corporeal Things  
 are said to be pure, in two Respects:

First,

First, as they are simple, unadulterated, and free from any foreign, or heterogeneous Mixture. Secondly, as they are clear and refined, and not affected by any Thing, that would contaminate and corrupt them. And these Notions of outward Purity, being transferred to the inward Purity of Men, shew us, that this consisteth, first, in that *Simplicity, or godly Sincerity*, which opposeth itself to all Hypocrisy, Dissimulation, and Deceit in them. And secondly, in that Chastity, Continence, and Sobriety, and that Moderation of Desire as to the Riches and Honours of the World, which exclude from both their Hearts and Practice all Carnality, Debauchery, and Intemperance, and all Covetousness and Pride.

First, the Purity of Men, consisteth in a *Simplicity, or godly Sincerity*, which opposeth itself to all Hypocrisy, Dissimulation and Deceit in them. And as this is a Disposition, which is to influence the Whole of our religious and moral Conduct, I shall consider its Operations, a little, with Respect both to God, and Man.

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1. With Respect to God; The Simplicity, or Sincerity of our Hearts towards him, will, in the first Place, raise in us a living Principle of Piety, founded on a firm Belief of his Existence; a lively Impression of his Perfection and Excellence, and a just Sense of his rightful Authority and Dominion over us; which will appear in all the proper Fruits of true Devotion, and Obedience to his Will. It will not suffer us to rest in an external and superficial Piety, or to take up with a mere Form of Godliness, which hath not any Life, or Virtue in it; but will make us to be real and ingenuous, and in earnest in the Service of God, and will indeed fix such a strong Sense of the Duty which we owe to him in our Minds, as will become the controuling and commanding Principle within us, making us solicitous above all Things, to approve ourselves his faithful Subjects and Servants, and resolutely to abstain from whatever is contrary to his Nature, and forbidden by him.

The same Simplicity towards God, will engage us to serve him, upon the noblest

hoblest, and best of Motives. It will not permit us, like the Hypocrites, to profess Godliness, for worldly Gain; or to put on a Cloak of Religion, for the Sake of Reputation, or to obtain Applause from Men, or to serve any other by-Ends, or Interests of our own; but from an high Veneration and Love of the most excellent and amiable of all Beings, from the most lively Gratitude to the greatest Benefactor, from an entire Approbation of Constitutions and Laws, founded on perfect Wisdom and Righteousness, it will make us to perform every Part of the Duty, which God requireth from us. Indeed Sincerity towards God, prevailing strongly within us, will cast out all Constraint and Fear, from our Devotions, and other religious Performances; will make us to proceed, with the utmost Freedom and Alacrity, in our Christian Course; and to render to God, a generous and perfect Service, as far as any Thing that we are capable of in this World, can be called perfect, flowing from pure Love and Affection.

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The Sincerity of our Hearts towards God, will farther make us to be impartial and uniform in our Obedience to his Commandments. It will not allow us to pick and chuse among the Duties of Religion, to practise some, and to omit others, perhaps of equal Importance, according to our own Fancies and Inclinations: It will not let us satisfy ourselves with an Appearance of being religious in the Face of the World, while we are conscious of any secret Wickedness; nor ever to think of compounding with God, for the Retention of our beloved Sins, while we only compliment him, with the Sacrifice of those, which are least agreeable to us, and which we can very easily part with. Such a Conduct would be full of the most gross Dissimulation and Hypocrisy. A true Simplicity, or Integrity of Heart towards God, will make us *to have a Respect to all his Commandments, and to stand perfect and complete in his whole Will*: It will make us to mortify our most favourite Corruptions, as well as those, to which we have the smallest Inclination; and to  
resist



resist and repel the Temptations, by which, we are in the greatest Danger of being seduced and overcome. The acting thus, is indeed the great Trial of our Sincerity and Uprightness, and of our having a *Conscience without Offence*, in Respect to God. When we do these Things, we may be sure, that we are in Possession of these most important of all Acquisitions; but if we fail herein, we can have no certain Evidence of our being possessed of them at all.

Finally, Sincerity towards God, will cause us, to be zealous, active, and abundant in his Service. It will make us to be, not only in earnest in the Work of the Lord, but quite alive, vigorous, and fervent in it. It will banish away all Sloth, Lukewarmness, and Indifference, from our Performance of religious Duties; will never suffer us to think, that *we have already attained*, or, *that we are already perfect*; nor to be easy, while we know, that any one Virtue, or an attainable Degree of any one Virtue, is wanting in us: It will, therefore, make us to use incessant Endeavours to grow better, and *to press*

*Of the Blessedness of*

*towards the Mark, for the Prize of our high Calling of God, in Christ Jesus; in a Word, to aim at Perfection, though it is certain, that in this Life, we can never fully attain to it. Sincerity, and Perfection, are frequently used, as Words of the same Signification in Scripture. Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright. Remember, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in Truth, and with a perfect Heart. Hast thou considered my Servant Job, that there is none like him upon Earth, a perfect, and an upright Man, one who feareth God, and escheweth Evil?*

2. With Respect to Men: Sincerity, or Simplicity, in Regard to them, consisteth in general, in conducting ourselves towards them, with Plainness, Fairness, and Candour, in Opposition to all double Dealing, Disguises, and Deceits, and will appear more especially in the following Particulars.

First, in our entertaining a lively impartial Sense of their several rightful Claims, and in our being careful and punctual in rendering to them all their Dues. It will not permit us, while we have

have a quick enough Discernment of our own Rights, to be blind, or totally inadvertent to those of our Neighbours; or, while we are very attentive to our own Interests, to be altogether unconcerned about theirs; but will, on the contrary, make us in general to feel for them, as we do for ourselves; and to deal with them in all Cases, as we would desire, in the same, or in like Circumstances, to be dealt with, by them.

More particularly, Sincerity, or Honesty, towards Men, will make us to act, according both to the Principles of strict Justice, and to the Dictates of Humanity and Benevolence, in our whole Intercourse and Conversation with them. It will make us to abstain from an Invasion of their Properties of every Kind, and to take care that none of them, shall sustain the least Loss, or Damage at our Hands. It will make us, in all Matters of Commerce and Trafficking, to deal openly and ingenuously with them; to take no Advantage of their Ignorance, Unskilfulness, and Necessities, for imposing hard Bargains

SERM. upon them, to sell no Commodities to  
 VII. them, under the Colour of being found  
 and good, when we know them to be  
 but slight and base; and to be moderate  
 and equitable in the Price which we  
 demand for those, that are most unex-  
 ceptionable. It will likewise oblige us,  
 to adhere inviolably to all the fair  
 Contracts and Engagements, which we  
 have entered into with Men, and to  
 fulfil all the Promises, which we have  
 made to them, for their Advantage,  
 and to which, they have not, by any  
 subsequent Misbehaviour, forfeited their  
 Right, without shuffling, or having  
 Recourse to any Tricks, or Subtleties,  
 for evading our Obligation; though the  
 doing so, may, in some Instances, tend  
 to our own Loss, or Harm. And Sin-  
 cerity, will oblige us, to treat our  
 Neighbours, not only according to these  
 Maxims of strict Righteousness, and  
 Equity; but likewise according to the  
 Dictates of Compassion and Charity:  
 For their Rights to the Offices of Be-  
 nevolence, though not so perfect and  
 determinate, as their Right to the Acts  
 of Justice, must be very apparent to us,  
 if

if we will but impartially consult our SERM.  
own Hearts, especially in Cases, of VII.  
great Distress, and in every Case,   
where the Performance of those Offices,  
putteth us but to little Labour, or Ex-  
pence. In all Cases of this Sort, there  
is certainly no Man, possessed of the  
least Ingenuity and Probity of Mind,  
who will not readily express his good  
Will and Regard to others.

Farther, The Sincerity, or Ingenuity  
of our Hearts towards Men, must in-  
fluence and govern us, in all Matters of  
Friendship, Trust, and Confidence. If  
we have entered into the sacred Bonds  
of Friendship with any Persons, we  
must certainly treat them, according to  
the Laws of the Relation subsisting be-  
tween them and us, with all Generosity,  
Tendernefs, and Constancy of Affection;  
otherwise our Pretences to Friendship,  
must be but mere Affectation, or an emp-  
ty hypocritical Shew. If we have taken  
any Offices, or Trusts upon us, which  
are of Importance either to the Public,  
or to particular Persons, we must exe-  
cute them, with all the Fidelity, Care,  
and Diligence, of which we are capa-  
ble: and if we have encouraged any, ei-  
ther



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ther by our Words and Professions, or by any Part of our Behaviour towards them, to depend upon our assisting them in certain Cases, we must not suffer a Sense of the Obligation, which we have brought ourselves under to them, to depart from our Minds, but must take the first Opportunity of answering their just Demands, and well founded Expectations from us. The Practices contrary to these, Falshood in the Affairs of Friendship, Breach of Trust, and a Neglect of the Interest of those, whom we have allowed to place a Confidence in us, are quite irreconcilable to all the generous and honest Feelings of the human Heart, and universally, and most deservedly, infamous among all Mankind.

Lastly, a Simplicity of Mind, must prevail in us, in all Cases of giving Testimony, and even in the whole of our common Discourse and Conversation in the World. Our Sincerity should be more especially visible, whenever we appear as Witnesses, in a Court of Judicature: Every Thing that we depose, should be exactly and literally true and clear.

clear; nor should any Thing be wanting in our Testimony, as far as our Knowledge goeth, which may be requisite to a full Understanding of the Case under Consideration. And in our common Intercourses in the World, we must accustom ourselves to great Plainness of Speech, void of all Ambiguity and Equivocation, and which will easily let those who hear us, into our real Meaning. We are not indeed to speak all that we know, in all Cases, and to all Persons: Some Reserve in Conversation, may be often very prudent and necessary. But in whatever we say, we must never prevaricate, nor endeavour to deceive, or mislead the Persons, with whom we converse. And in the Height of our Civility and Courtesy to others, we must avoid all such Extravagance of Compliment, as hath nothing corresponding to it, in our inward Sentiments and Dispositions. We must make no Professions of high Esteem and Kindness to the Men, whom in our Hearts, we despise and hate. The contrary Behaviour, made up of Perjury, Lying, and Flattery, is the very Reverse of that Sincerity and Probity

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Probity of Heart, with which Men should treat one another; and is besides extremely odious in its own Nature, and productive of infinite Mischief in the World.

And thus we have an Account of Purity, in the full Sense of it, as consisting in *Simplicity*, or *godly Sincerity*, and seen how this operateth, in Respect both of God, and of Man. 2. As for Purity in the other Sense of it, consisting in Chastity, Continence, and Sobriety, and a Freedom from an excessive Attachment to the Riches and Honours of the World. Purity, in this Sense, doth not mean to extinguish any of our natural Appetites and Desires; or to render us quite dead, or insensible as to the external Objects, which by their Nature, are fitted to yield us any innocent Pleasure and Enjoyment; but to moderate and govern our Desires as to all sensitive Objects, in such a Manner, as to prevent all the Violences and Exorbitances of them; so as that they may never impair our superior Powers, and better Affections, or be inconsistent with the Duty which we owe either to God, or to our Neighbours;

hours; so as to exclude both from our Hearts, and our Practice, whatever can be properly called Carnality, Debauchery, and Intemperance, and all Covetousness and Pride. I shall explain these Things, a little more particularly.

I. Purity, as it consisteth in Chastity and Continence, though it doth not hinder the Gratification of our softer and more tender Affections, in the Way, which is plainly enough pointed out for the Gratification of them, in the Constitution of our Nature, and the Order of the World; yet doth strictly forbid all the Excesses and Irregularities of them, which the holy Scriptures condemn by the Name of *the Lusts of the Flesh*, and declare to be very ruinous and dangerous to Men. *Adultery, Fornication*, and all the other gross, and even the smaller Acts of Carnality; nay, the very Thoughts and Purposes of Debauchery, with all lascivious and obscene Discourse, come under this Class. *This is the Will of God*, saith St. Paul, *even your Sanctification, that ye should abstain from Fornication*. But *Fornication*, saith he, *and all Uncleanness, let it not once be named*

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named among you, as becometh Saints: neither Filthiness, and foolish Talking and Jestings, which are not convenient. For this ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God: Whoremongers and Adulterers, God will judge. And because there were profane Persons then, as well as there are now, who made light of these Offences, pretending that there was but little, or no Evil in them, and that God would not at all punish them, or but very slightly, the Apostle giveth a particular Caution against such a vain Conceit: *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; for because of these Things, cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience. Ye have heard, saith our Saviour, that it was said by them of old Time, thou shalt not commit Adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh upon a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart. Out of the Heart, saith he in another Place, proceed evil Thoughts, Adulteries, Fornications, Lasciviousness; and these are Things which defile a Man.*

Not



Nor need we be surprized that Christianity should so strictly prohibit, and threaten Men so severely on Account of these Vices; if we consider their Tendency to debase the Soul, and to spread a deadly Infection and Taint over it, enslaving all its Faculties to sensual and gross Conceptions; and in Consequence of this, raising a strong Aversion in Men, to all rational and spiritual Employments, and to the divine Pleasures of Virtue, or moral Goodness: And if we reflect farther, on the pernicious Effects of these Vices, on the Interests of Society, and of Mankind; that the Consequences of them are often fatal both to the Health and Fortunes of Men; that they breed the greatest Confusion and Disturbance in Families, giving the utmost Anguish and Distraction of Mind to the Kindred and Friends of the Party, whom the brutal Appetites of Men prompt them to dishonour, and exposing the Person herself, to perpetual Confusion and Remorse, or to what is infinitely worse, an Insensibility of all Honour and Shame, a right, and wrong Conduct; to be the Scorn and Aversion of  
the

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the World, and very possibly, after some Time, of the Man himself who hath been the Author of her Misery. Would Men but allow themselves to attend seriously to the terrible Effects, which their irregular and licentious Pursuits of this Kind produce, and how much more injurious they are, than many of those Crimes, for which we think it just to bring the Perpetrators of them to a shameful End, and to cut them off as public Examples; surely none, who are not abandoned to all Sense of Virtue and Honour, would approve of the one Sort of Offences, more than of the other.

2. Purity, as it consisteth in Sobriety, moderateth our Appetites as to eating and drinking. It indeed alloweth us to indulge them so far, as the State of our Health and Constitution of Body may require us to do so; but strictly restraineth us, from the Excesses of Gluttony and Drunkenness. Our Saviour thought fit, to put his Disciples upon their Guard against these Vices, in a very affectionate Admonition, which he gave in Relation to them: *Take Heed to yourselves, lest at any Time, your Hearts be overchar-*

ged

ged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, And the Apostles, in the Catalogues which they give us of the Works of the Flesh, which degrade human Nature, and are inconsistent with Religion, and exclude from the Kingdom of Heaven, have inserted *Drunkenness and Revellings*, as well as Adultery, Fornication, and Lasciviousness. And certainly, there is nothing which the Man, who consulteth the Dignity and Perfection of his Nature, is more concerned to guard against, than Excess and Irregularity in the Use of Meats and Drinks. There is indeed a natural Turpitude and Deformity in all Vice, which render it disreputable to him who practiseth it; and hateful to those who behold it. But there is no Vice, which is more unbecoming and unseemly in a Man, and more justly detested by all virtuous Minds, than this of Intemperance is. Our Reason is our peculiar Glory, the Beauty and Excellency of human Nature, which exalteth us above the other Beings of this World, and maketh us to resemble the Angels, and the Father of Spirits himself. And in improving

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this excellent Faculty, and acting according to its Directions, our Perfection as intelligent Beings, properly consists. But now by surfeiting ourselves with Meats, and our excessive Use of Wine, and strong Drinks, we, for the most Part, put our Reason under so great a Disorder, either so total a Depression, or such an unruly Violence, that we have not any longer Use of it, and differ from the brutal Creation, only in external Shape and Appearance. By such an Irregularity, we darken the Image of God in us, extinguish that Light, which should be the constant Guide of our Life, and for several Hours, make ourselves such silly, or extravagant Creatures, that we are exposed to the Derision and Contempt of every sober Spectator. And though after a-while, we may come to ourselves, and regain the Exercise of Reason, yet the next Debauch throws us back into the same Condition; and after we have for a considerable Time continued our licentious Course, we bring on a Sort of constant Stupidity, and base Drowiness of Mind, from which, it is scarce possible ever to recover ourselves



selves again. So ignominious and dishonourable is this Vice to Mankind, and so far doth it sink them beneath the Dignity of their Nature. And now who of us can consider this, and yet allow ourselves with any Ease or Freedom to practise it? Surely it may be expected, that if there was no other Harm in Intemperance, nor any Danger at all attending it, the very Affront which it putteth upon us, would be Argument enough against it. If for no other Reason, yet out of mere Generosity and Greatness of Mind; out of pure Respect to ourselves, and to the Dignity and Rank of our Being, and our Order in the World; out of very Reverence to human Nature, and our inward Sense of the Indecency and Vileness of the Thing, it may be hoped, that we shall carefully refrain from this Vice, and not only blush, but abhor to think of our being chargeable with what is so mean and unmanly, so peculiarly disparaging and infamous, as the Practice of it is.

Lastly, Purity, as consisting in a Moderation of our Desires, as to the Riches and Honours of the World, will allow



SERM. VII. us to make a just Estimation of Wealth, and to acquire it, in the highest Degree, that we can arrive at, by fair and honourable Means; in order to our laying it out afterwards, in the Uses of Piety, Benevolence, and Generosity; but meaneth to kill in us all the Seeds of Covetousness, or of an excessive Fondness for Money, which is a base Affection, that contaminateth the Heart, by fixing it upon an Object, which is far below the heavenly Original, and noble Capacity of the Soul of Man, and those glorious and blessed Hopes, which are laid up for every true and faithful Christian; and designeth to reconcile us to any Lot, which the good Providence of God shall assign to us; to make us trust in him for our outward Support, while we sincerely endeavour to do our Duty; and if we have *but Food and Raiment, therewith to be contented*. Purity, in the same Sense, alloweth us to put a true Value upon an honest Fame, and a clear Reputation; but will mortify us, to all the Sentiments and Projects of a vain and misguided Ambition, and will remove far away from us, all Pride, Haughtiness,

ness, and Insolence, which are very mean and odious Qualities, and render those, who entertain them, abominable in the Sight of God; Every one, saith Solomon, who is proud in Heart, is an Abomination to the Lord: And will, on the contrary, make us humble and modest, courteous and condescending in our whole Behaviour.

Having thus explained the virtuous Qualification, which our Saviour mentioneth in the Text, I shall next consider a little, the Reward, or Blessedness, which he promiseth to those, who are possessed of it, which is, that *they shall see God*.

As it is impossible, that God can ever be the Object of any of our outward Senses, the Expression of *seeing him*, is to be understood figuratively; and as *seeing*, is frequently in Scripture, and in other Writings, as well as in common Discourse, put for knowing, and enjoying, the Meaning of the Promise made to *the pure in Heart*, is, in general, that they shall know, and enjoy God.

I. *The pure in Heart*, shall know God, partly in this Life, and partly,

*Of the Blessedness of*

and more fully, in that which is to come. In this World, they will attain to a Knowledge of his Existence, and of all his principal Attributes, in that Use of their intellectual Faculties, which the good Dispositions of their Minds, will naturally lead and prompt them to : By this Means, they will *from the Things that are made, discern the invisible Things of God*, and soon be convinced of the Existence of an original, supreme, and independent Mind, who formed all Things, and upon whom they all depend : And that this original and independent Being, is perfectly intelligent and wise, most powerful, holy, just, and good ; who not only created the World, but still preserveth it, and presideth over it ; and concerneth himself particularly in the Affairs of Men, both as a gracious Father, and a righteous Lord and Governor. And this Knowledge, which the *pure in Heart* obtain of the Deity, is not a merely speculative Knowledge of him, which some of the worst of Men, may sometimes attain to, as well as they ; but is an affectionate practical Knowledge, which will produce in them

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the sincerest and highest Devotion of SERM.  
Soul towards him, which will make VII.  
them to glorify him as God, in their   
whole Conversation; to behave towards  
him in all Respects, agreeably to the  
Relations in which they stand to him, as  
his Creatures, Dependents, and Bene-  
ficiaries; and as his voluntary Subjects  
and Servants.

But the greatest and best Knowledge  
of God, which *the pure in Heart* can  
attain to, in this World, is but very  
small and imperfect, in Comparison of  
that Knowledge of him, which they  
shall obtain in the World to come. In  
this Life, our Knowledge of God,  
though in several Points undoubtedly  
true, and well founded, and likewise  
clear and distinct; yet, in others, is  
often obscure and confused; the Reason  
of which is, that it ariseth not from any  
immediate and direct View of the Ob-  
ject, but only from a Reflection of the  
divine Perfections, as manifested to us,  
in the Works of Creation and Provi-  
dence. Here we see darkly through a  
*Glass*, through a Medium, which fre-  
quently conveyeth to us, indistinct and



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perplexed, and mistaken Apprehensions of Things: Here we know but in Part, which is more especially true with respect to our Knowledge of God: For after all our Searches, and Endeavours to find him out, how small a Portion of him is really understood by us? what is wanting to compleat our Knowledge of him, is not to be numbered. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in Part, shall be done away. When we arrive at a State of superior Accomplishment and Perfection in another World, the Light of it will scatter the Darkness and Mists, which now surround us, will put an End to those partial, defective, and confused Methods of Information, which at present we are often forced to take up with, and will give us far more clear, distinct, and comprehensive Notions and Views: Particularly with Respect to God, we shall then with open Face behold his Glory, see him as he is, and know him, even as also we are known. The full Import of these Phrases, is not indeed now to be declared, or expressed by us. But so much seemeth plainly to be implied in them;



them; that hereafter God himself will be the immediate and direct Object of our Contemplation; that his Perfections themselves, and not merely the Effects of them, as here, shall be presented to our intellectual Faculties; and that our Knowledge of him, shall be fully commensurate to our highest Capacity of Discernment, perfectly clear and satisfying, and shall exclude all Mistakes, Uncertainties, and Doubts concerning him.

2. *The pure in Heart* shall likewise enjoy God, and that partly in this World, and partly and more fully in the World to come. Even here they shall *taste and see, that the Lord is good*; shall receive large Communications of Mercy and Grace from him, and have a high Relish of his Goodness, and shall rejoice and triumph in the Relations, which he condescendeth to bear to them, of a Father and Protector, a Guardian and Governor, and a Friend and Benefactor. From *the Light of his Countenance shining upon them*; or from a strong Sense of his Favour, and an assured Hope of the Continuance of it, they will feel a serene

Joy

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Joy and Chearfulness diffused through all their Faculties; which will be a never-failing Source of Consolation to them, which will revive them in Adversities, and support them under all Distresses, and settle them, as far as the State of Things in the World will permit of it, in Quiet and Tranquility. And yet, the highest Enjoyment of God, which the purest and best of Men can attain to in this Life is but a small, and a very imperfect Foretaste of that Enjoyment which they shall have of him, in the Life which is to come. There they shall have a direct and clear View of the Glories of his Nature, and from thence be transformed into his Likeness, and be for ever united in perfect Love to him, the Fountain of all Excellence, and the Parent of all Good. The Happiness resulting from hence, is at present altogether inexpressible and inconceivable by us. But we may venture to say, that beyond it, it is impossible to form an Imagination, or to entertain a Wish of any Thing that is pleasing and desirable.

This

*the pure in Heart.*

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This is the Blessedness which is provided for, and promised to the pure in Heart. And it is easy to be observed, that the Qualities which they are possessed of, and which make up their distinguishing Character, naturally prepare them for, and lead them to the Enjoyment of this high Happiness. For as *without Holiness*, it is not possible, that any Person can *see the Lord*; so whoever is endowed with it, is fitted for contemplating and knowing him, and for tasting and relishing most exquisitely his Loving-kindness in this World; and for living for ever in his glorious Presence in the next, and for partaking of all the Pleasure and Satisfaction, which can result from the closest Intimacy and Communion with him. The Man, who is free from all the Depravities, or evil Qualities, which alone can make a Separation between God, and any rational moral Agents, and who *partaketh* eminently of a *divine Nature*, will be attracted by a Kind of natural Sympathy, to the Centre of all Purity and Excellence, will have the nearest Access to God, and be inseparably attached and  
affixed

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affixed to him, and find in the Knowledge and Love of him, the highest Felicity for evermore.

What then remaineth, but that all of us should carefully prepare ourselves, for partaking of this unspeakable Happiness, by acquiring that *Purity of Heart*, which both by the Promise of God, and the natural Tendency of the Thing, will secure it to us; that we should use all Diligence, *to cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, both of the Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect universal Holiness in the Fear of God*; to purge out of our Nature, every Relick of Insincerity and Hypocrisy, Carnality and worldly Mindedness; and to arrive at the most generous and manly Probity and Integrity of Heart, and the strictest Moderation, in the Indulgence of our private Appetites and Desires. And that in order to this, we should set the bright Example of God himself, always before us, and contemplate his spotlessly pure and perfect Nature, with Admiration and Delight, till we find its transforming Power, in making us *holy in all Manner of Conversation, as he, who hath called us*

*is holy; and in purifying us, even as God is pure. And that we should likewise be much conversant in the Word of God, which our Saviour hath declared to be one great Means of our Sanctification; and by taking Heed to which, the Psalmist telleth us, that even a young Man may cleanse his Way. And finally, that to all our other Endeavours, for attaining to a State of inward Purity, we should add our sincere and humble Prayers to God, for his Assistance; saying, every one of us, in the Words of David, Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.*



# S E R M O N VIII.

Of the Blessedness of the Peace-makers.

Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.

IN this Beatitude, there are two Things, which naturally offer themselves to our Consideration. First, the Character of the persons, whom our Saviour here declares to be blessed. The Peace-makers. Secondly, the Award, or Reward of these Blessedness. For they shall be called the children of God.

As for the Character, the word here is used to be blessed, the

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## S E R M O N V I I I .

Of the Blessedness of the Peacemakers.

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MATTHEW V. 9.

*Blessed are the Peacemakers; for they shall be called the Children of God.*

I N this Beatitude, there are two SERM.  
VIII.  
Things, which naturally offer themselves to our Consideration: First, the Character of the Persons, whom our Saviour here declareth to be blessed; *the Peacemakers.* Secondly, the Argument, or Proof of their Blessedness; *for they shall be called the Children of God.*

I. As for the Character of the Persons, here declared to be blessed, *the Peace-*

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*Peacemakers*: This importeth, that they are of a calm, meek, moderate, and quiet Spirit; that they are willing to maintain a good Understanding, and to live in an uninterrupted Harmony and Friendship with every Man, and to bring all Men to a benevolent, gentle, and peaceable Disposition towards one another. This is what is in general implied in the Character of the *Peacemakers*: But for a farther Explanation of it, I shall consider what is included in it as it is very diffusive; first with Respect to Mankind in general; secondly, with Respect to Christians in particular.

First, with Respect to Mankind in general: This Character implieth, that we entertain a sincere Love of them; which is indeed the Parent of Peaceableness, or the Root, from which the several Branches of it, grow, and are cherished: It importeth, that we are averse from all public Disturbances, and private Animosities; that we have a Horror of the Rage and Devastation of War; a Dislike to national Feuds and Factions, and to Divisions and

Con-

*the Peace-makers.*

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Contentions, in particular Neighbourhoods and Families; that we are desirous of an universal Agreement among Men; and endeavour what is in our Power, to establish the World, in a State of entire Serenity and Quietness: that whenever a Contest ariseth, we are ready to put an End to it, or to allay it, by Advice and Persuasion, detecting Misrepresentations, and removing Mistakes, and setting Things in such a Light, before Parties at Variance, as will be most apt to make them to compromise their Differences, to forget their Quarrels, and to reconcile them sincerely and effectually to one another: It importeth likewise that we are always praying for the Peace of the World, and the Nations, Cities, Neighbourhoods, and Places, where we live, upon a just Foundation; endeavouring thus, to join to our own Efforts for Peace, the Concurrence of Providence for promoting and securing it.

This Character of *Peace-makers*, with Regard to all Men, farther importeth, that the Persons, to whom it belongeth, behave themselves quite inoffensively to

SERM. all, that they treat no an with Insolence,  
VIII. Rudeness, and Scurrility, with Anger,  
~~~~~ Wrath, and Haughtiness; that they are  
so far from doing a real Injury to any
of their Neighbours, either in their Ac-
tions, or Discourses, that they endea-
vour, by all the Acts of Humanity and
Benevolence in their Power, and by all
the Expressions of Meekness, Courtesy,
and Civility, to conciliate their Good-
will and Affection, and to obtain their
Esteem and Confidence. It implieth,
that they are far from acting the Part
of Busy-bodies, Whisperers, and Tale-
bearers, by intermeddling unnecessarily
in the Affairs of other Men, by prying
into their private Concerns, taking up
groundless Jealousies and Suspicions of
them, hearkening to evil Reports of
them, and divulging rashly, what they
know, or imagine will turn to the Pre-
judice of their Characters; a Conduct
directly calculated to do Mischief, to
breed Enmity and Discord, and endless
Confusion and Animosity. From all
such incendiary Practices, a Man of a
peaceful Temper, will carefully abstain;
and will likewise divest himself of all
those

those Qualities and Passions, which are apt to engender Strifes and Quarrels, among Men; such as an immoderate selfishness, or too strict an Attention to every little Interest and Concern of our own, Envy, Revenge, an inordinate Ambition, Pride, and the like; some of which, lie at the Bottom of most of the Jarrings and Contentions, which are in the World; and on the contrary, will cloath himself with Charity and Humility; which two Qualities, if they prevailed sincerely and universally in the Hearts of Men, would immediately check their ill Humours, and put an End to all Heart-burnings and Animofities among them, would turn the Earth into a Paradise, where all Things would smile and flourish, and make human Society a Scene of constant Tranquility and Pleasure.

Farther, the Character of the *Peace-makers*, as it exerteth itself towards all Men, includeth a Disposition *to render to all their Dues; Tribute, to whom Tribute is due; Custom, to whom Custom; Fear, to whom Fear; Honour, to whom Honour;* to pay a just Obedience to law-

SERM. VIII.  ful Authority, to reverence Magistrates, and to assist them in the Execution of their Offices for the common Good; to treat our Superiours in general, with a decent and respectful Submission; our Equals, with Affability, Courtesy, and Modesty; and our Inferiours, with Equity and Kindness, Gentleness, and Condescension: Things of the utmost Consequence for keeping up social Order; or for maintaining that just Subordination in the various Ranks and Relations of Mankind, upon which the Harmony and Welfare of the Public, as well as private Happiness do necessarily depend.

Lastly, this Character importeth, when Peace hath been unhappily interrupted, or broken, between us, and any Men, that we are willing to regain and re-establish it, and take all proper Measures for accomplishing that End: that if the Difference, or Misunderstanding between us, and any of our Neighbours, hath arisen from some Inattention, or Indiscretion on our Part, we be ready to explain our Conduct, and to shew, at least, that no Injury,

was

was meant, or designed by us; or, if we be sensible, that we have given Offence from a worse Principle, that without Reluctance we acknowledge our Fault, and ask Pardon; and make up any Loss, that the Person complaining of us, hath sustained by us: Or, if we should be on the suffering Side, and have the Right of complaining with us, yet we should still be *easy to be entreated* by our offending Brother, ready to accept of any equitable Acknowledgement and Reparation from him, and in Consequence of this, to live on Terms of Amity and Friendship with him: Or even, if he should not, according to his Duty, take the first Steps towards a Reconciliation; yet, if there should be any probable Hope of succeeding, by our making the first Advances, that we should not stand upon Form, or Ceremony, for bringing about so desirable an Event, nay, that we should be willing to suffer some Inconvenience and Loss, and to recede from our strict Right in some Cases, rather than to be litigious, and perpetuate a Contest: According to the Di-

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rections, which our Saviour giveth us; *But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a Mile; go with him twain.* The Meaning of which, is not, that we should in all Cases, be quite tame and passive, when outrageously wicked Men attack, abuse and injure us; but in the Case of smaller Offences and Injuries, signified by the *jewish* proverbial Phrases which our Saviour here useth, that we should not, either by the Methods of immediate direct Force, or by commencing Suits at Law, endeavour to redress them; chusing rather to bear them patiently, than to vex ourselves, and to disturb the World, with Controversies and Litigations about them. And according to the honourable Example of *Abraham*, in yielding to *Lot*, when the Damage, which he was to sustain, by doing so, was but small: *Let there be no Strife, I pray thee, between me, and thee; and between my Handmen, and thy*

Handmen;

Handmen; for we be Brethren. Is not the whole Land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee from me; if thou wilt take the left Hand, then will I go to the right; or if thou depart to the right Hand, then will I go to the left. Prudence indeed must direct us, how far we are to proceed in this Way of Forbearance and Condescension, and to make our Concessions in such a Manner, as not to expose ourselves by them, to new and, perhaps, greater Indignities and Injuries; and so as that they may appear to flow, not from Insensibility, or the Want of Spirit in us, but from pure Goodness of Heart, and an ardent Love of Peace.

These are the principal Things, included in the Character of *the Peace-makers*, with Reference to all Men in general: To all which, we are urged and prompted, by Arguments and Considerations of the greatest Weight: By the Consideration of the common Relation, which all Men bear to one another, which is that of Brethren; as they are all the Offspring of one Father, and are all born to the same natural



vileges and Advantages; among whom, therefore, Strife and Discord, Variance and Enmity, must be unnatural, and very indecent and offensive. By the Consideration of the Necessity of Harmony and Peace, in both the larger and smaller Societies of Men, for promoting and establishing their Happiness, which is necessarily ruined by Discord and Division. *Every Kingdom divided against itself, is brought to Desolation: and every City, or House divided against itself, shall not stand.* Intestine Animosities and Quarrels, undermine the Foundation, on which they are built, dissipate their Strength, leave them weak and defenceless, and an easy Prey to any foreign Enemy; besides that they make the Members, which compose Nations, Cities, and Families, *to bite and devour one another, till they come to be consumed one of another.* By the Consideration likewise of the Comeliness and Pleasantness of an Union among Men, founded in Amity and Love. *Behold how good and pleasant it is, saith the Psalmist, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity!* which he illustrates, by comparing that Union,

Union, first to the precious Ointment, poured on the Head of *Aaron*, when consecrated to the Office of High Priest, which being extremely odoriferous, diffused a most fragrant and grateful Smell to all around him : And to the *Dew of Heaven*, which both refreshed and fructified, and made the Face of Nature, to look gay and chearful. And to which, in the last Place, we are excited by the common Instincts of Humanity, uniting Men into one Body, and determining them to a Life of social Order and Harmony with one another. The famous Position of a dogmatical Philosopher, that the State of Nature, is a State of War ; or, that by their original Constitution, Men are so many Wolves and Tygers to one another ; is so far from being true, that it is the very Reverse ; as well as full of Contumely to Mankind, and of Blasphemy against their Creator. Never, surely, was a Maxim, on which so much dependeth, founded upon such superficial Observation ; having no other Foundation, than the common Appearances of Outrage, Revenge and Cruelty in the Conduct

SERM. duct of Men, when their Passions are
 VIII. exasperated and inflamed against each
 ~~~~~ other, from Mistakes and Misapprehensions concerning their respective Rights and Interests, or are perverted by the unnatural Impulses of Superstition and Enthusiasm: whereas human Nature retaining its genuine Form and exerting itself in a just Order, its intellectual Faculties, being well informed, and discovering Things in a true Light, and its Passions and Affections operating under their Influence and Direction, hath a most apparent and strong Tendency to make Men loving and friendly, gentle and peaceable towards one another.

Secondly, I shall consider the Character of the *Peace-makers*, with Respect to Christians in particular. There is a peculiar Peace and Harmony, to be cultivated among fellow Christians, as such. Over and above that which we are directed to maintain with all Men in common, the Gospel prescribeth something special in this Matter, with Reference to the visible Subjects of Christ's Kingdom, and Mem-  
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bers of his Body. Our Saviour is described under the Character of *the Prince of Peace*; God is said to be *the Author, not of Confusion, but of Peace, in all the Churches of the Saints. Have Peace one with another. Let us follow after the Things which make for Peace. Keeping the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace. Be at Peace among yourselves. Be of one Mind, live in Peace.* Such Passages as these, are plainly intended, not only to make the Professors of Christianity, to live amicably together, in the same Sense, in which they are obliged to do so with all Men, in the common Offices of Life, though most certainly that is included, and with additional Obligations, as we are fellow Christians; but more especially to have a peaceable Spirit towards one another in Matters of Religion. It must, however, be owned with Grief and Shame, that, in Fact, there never have been greater, more violent, and inveterate Dissensions in the World, than among professed Christians, and that upon the very Score of their Religion. With Respect to this Event, though not as to the Tendency of his

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Doctrinē, our Saviour foretold, that he *was come, not to send Peace upon Earth, but a Sword*: That is, that the various Lusts, and irregular Passions of Men, would so abuse his Institution, that it would often be made the Occasion of the most outrageous, bitter, and cruel Contentions and Persecutions. But as to the proper Design, and true Tendency of *his Coming*, the Angels, at his Birth, proclaimed it to be, *Peace on Earth, Good-will towards Men*. And so the whole Stream of the Doctrine, delivered both by himself, and his Apostles declare. And *the Way of Peace* among Christians, seemeth to be as plainly laid before us, if we are but in a Disposition to attend to it, as almost any other Thing whatsoever is.

Not by bringing those, who profess Christianity, to a perfect Uniformity of Sentiment, as to all Points of Religion: For this, all who are acquainted with the Constitution of human Nature, and the Situation of Men in this World, must know to be quite impossible; and that any Attempts towards it, so far as they are in Appearance successful, must

pro-



produce only Stupidity, or Hypocrisy, and prove the Bane of whatever is truly excellent, or praise-worthy in Religion. This, therefore, can never be the Foundation of that Peace, which is to take Place among Christians, which indeed standeth upon a quite different Bottom.

Nor yet, is the Peace of Christians to be established by any arbitrary Constitutions, or Forms of Agreement, or Consent, descending to a great Variety of Doctrines and Opinions; whereby all who receive such Constitutions and Forms, shall be obliged, either to profess many Things, which they do not, and cannot believe to be true; or to acquiesce patiently and silently in Decisions, which they see to be utterly absurd, and of a very dangerous and pernicious Tendency. These indeed are the Methods, which have been very commonly used, for keeping up Harmony, or Peace, among Christians. But they will be so far from doing so, that they will certainly disturb and break it. When some of the Disciples and Servants of our common Lord, are for *lording it* over their fellow Disciples, and fellow Servants,

or

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or for imperiously imposing their own Dictates upon them, and rejecting them from their Society and Communion, if they do not, in every Tittle, come up to their Scheme, or Standard, it is not to be expected, that Peace, upon such Terms, can long subsist. For while there are Men, who read the Scriptures impartially, and know the Prerogative of Christ, as the sole Lawgiver and Governor of his Church, who are acquainted with the original unalienable Privileges of human Nature, and who set a just Value on *the Liberty with which our Saviour hath made his Followers free*; there will be always some, who will have Generosity and Fortitude of Mind enough, to assert the royal Prerogative of the Lord Jesus, and his sole Right to fix the Terms of Salvation, and of religious Communion; and to vindicate the Freedom of his Subjects from all those Doctrines and Commandments of Men, which would impose any Things upon them, as necessary and essential Parts of Religion, more than the Doctrine of our Lord, had before declared to be so; who must consequently

quently oppose all such human Inventions and Encroachments, and resolve with St. Paul, *not to give Place by Subjection to them, for so much as an Hour,* that the Truth and Purity of the Gospel may continue with its Professors.

It is not, therefore, by such Ways and Means as these, that Peace among Christians is to be introduced and established. But in order to the effecting and maintaining this Peace, we are directed to look upon all as our fellow Disciples, *who call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus, both their Lord, and ours;* who are really Members of that Body, of which he is the Head; or who are united to him, by a true Faith and Love: In a Word, who appear to have a sound Belief of all the main Principles of Religion, and to be sincere in the Practice of it; though we apprehend them to be mistaken in many inferior Points of Speculation, and see several practical Failings and Imperfections in them. And we are to treat them accordingly, to live in Friendship, Love, and Communion with them; according to the Direction of the Apostle, *Him that is weak in the Faith,*

SERM. *Faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations.* Upon this Plan of mutual  
 VIII. Charity and Forbearance alone, Unity and Peace in the Societies of Christians, can be effectually promoted. And now if we would answer to the Character of *Peace-makers* among Christians, we see what our Duty is ; we must not eagerly and bitterly contend with our Brethren, for disagreeing with us in small Matters ; but *with all Lowliness and Meekness, with Long-suffering must forbear one another in Love.* We must not judge our Brother, nor set at nought our Brother ; but judge this rather, *that no Man put a Stumbling-block, or an Occasion to fall in his Brother's Way.* We must allow to every one the same Liberty of differing from us, which we take to ourselves in differing from him, without censuring, or reproaching him for it, or declaring him to be out of the Favour of God, when it is very possible, that he may be as sincere in his Search after Truth as we are, and equally accepted of God, with ourselves. And we must endeavour to the utmost of our Power, to allay the Heat, which hath been raised in Matters  
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of doubtful Disputation ; to convince all we converse with, of the Wickedness of abusing and reviling their Brethren, calling them by the odious Name of Hereticks, and excluding them from their Communion, for Things no way essential to Religion ; and to bring them to Calmness and Moderation of Mind, and a Disposition to unite with their Brethren, upon the large and generous Foundation of the Gospel. And to all our other Endeavours, we must add our frequent and fervent Addresses to the God of Love and Peace, that he would pour out a healing Spirit upon the Churches, and restore Harmony and Union to them ; that he would at length be pleased, to put an End to the fatal Divisions and Animosities, which abound among the true Professors of the Gospel, and make all those, *who love our Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity, to love one another, with pure Hearts, fervently.*

Before we proceed farther, it may not be improper here to observe, that though no Men have a Right to add to the Gospel, or to make any other Terms of Salvation, and of Christian Communion, than



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those, which *the Author and Finisher of our Faith* hath declared to be such ; and if any should assume an Authority to do so, (which would indeed be to make a new, or another Gospel) that they should be opposed and withstood, with a vigorous and undisguised Zeal ; yet, in Matters of Expedience, Decency, and Order, which are all variable in their Nature, and may be diversified according to the different Notions and Tempers of Men, there is Room for Condescensions and Compliances, for our falling in with the received Customs and Usages of the Society to which we belong, though these should happen not to be exactly agreeable to our own Sentiments and Opinions ; while they are not imposed as necessary, but are only considered as prudent, decent, and orderly Regulations, by the greater Part of the Church, or of the collective Body, which adopteth them. This Sort of Condescension is perfectly agreeable both to the Directions and Examples, which are proposed to us by Christianity, and is in some Measure necessary for maintaining the Order and Harmony of Society, and rendering



rendering a Man useful in it, and is what, when accompanied with Discretion, may be expected of every peaceful Man.

And thus we see, what the Character of the Peace-makers implieth with Respect to Christians in particular. I shall proceed to the second Thing offered to our Consideration in the Text, after I have just observed, that the using our best Endeavours, for removing, or allaying the Differences which subsist among Christians, and for establishing and promoting an universal Harmony in their Societies, is a Thing to which we are naturally led, and most strictly obliged, not only by the original Propensions of our Nature, inclining us to live quietly and peaceably with all Men ; but by the whole Strain and Tendency of our Religion, which is most apparently calculated to suppress all turbulent Passions in us, and to check all the Motions of an angry, froward, and peevish Zeal ; and to inspire us with the Sentiments of Humility and Forbearance, of Candour and Gentleness, and of Love and Concord. And from the Consideration of the great

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Importance of Peace, for the Prosperity of the Churches of Christ, for the Edification and Improvement of the Professors of the Gospel, and preventing their falling into a degenerate and carnal State; for increasing their Knowledge, and making practical Religion to prevail and flourish among them, which must necessarily be greatly endangered and hurt, whenever a Spirit of Strife and Faction, of Variance and Discord, reigneth.

II. Let us now consider briefly the Argument, or Proof of the Blessedness *of the Peace-makers, because they shall be called the Children of God.*

This is the most sublime and glorious Appellation that can be; infinitely transcending the highest Titles of Dignity and Honour derived from Descent, the Appointment of States and Princes, or from any other Source whatsoever in this World; which is founded upon the most solid Worth, and productive of the greatest Happiness. The Appellation, indeed, in general, is given to Men upon various Accounts: But in the noblest Sense, it is ascribed to them, on Account

count of their bearing a Similitude to that great Being, the Original of all Excellence and Perfection, who condescendeth to call them his Children.

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Now as the Peace-makers carry a striking Resemblance of some of the most amiable Perfections of God, in the prevailing Temper of their Minds; as by their Disposition and Endeavours to establish and promote Love, Harmony, and Order in the World, they concur with, and imitate the best and greatest of all Beings, in his most beneficial and glorious Works, they are justly to be accounted his Children: By being the *Sons of Peace*, they are the Sons of the God of Peace, and will be acknowledged, honoured, and rewarded as such, by him.

Farther, the Peace-makers will be called the Children of God, as they are like to *Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God*; who came down from Heaven, to declare and establish the Terms of Reconciliation and Peace, between God and Man, and who, both by his Doctrine and Example, inculcated most strenuously and affectionately, the Law

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of universal Love, which tendeth to remove every Thing, that would breed Vexation and Disturbance in the World, and to settle the Affairs of Men, in a State of perfect Quietness, Serenity and Joy. The Peace-makers, by imitating him, in Labours of the same generous and beneficent Kind, deserve to be stiled his Brethren, and will accordingly be received and approved as such, both by him, and by his heavenly Father.

Thus then you see, how the Persons of this excellent Character, shall be called the Children of God: And now that this is a sufficient Argument of their Blessedness, will require but a very few Words to illustrate it. For what are the Consequences of this Privilege? the Dignity, Honour, and Felicity resulting from it, are so immense, that they made a great and good Man\* to declare, that if we could but affect our Minds, with a just and lively Sense of them, it must necessarily overwhelm us, and communicate a Joy to us, which we should not be able to survive. Upon the Authority

\* Martin Luther.



of St. Paul, we may assure ourselves, that if we be the *Children of God, then we are Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ*. By being the Sons of God, we are Heirs of Immortality, and entitled to *that Inheritance, which is incorruptible, and undefiled, and which fadeth not away*. And what greater Happiness can there be, than what is contained in this? It must be vastly more than a sufficient Recompence, for all our Works and Labours in the Ways of Peace and Love; and must satisfy to the utmost all our Wishes, Desires, and Hopes. To conclude:

What then remaineth, but that we become most careful and diligent in the Attainment of this excellent Temper, in Consideration of the great Blessedness which is here promised to it. Many are the Arguments to persuade and induce us to Peace; several of which, have been briefly hinted at, in the foregoing Parts of this Discourse; but this one Consideration may be enough to excite us to an earnest and constant Cultivation of it. Perhaps, some peevish and angry Men, acting under the Spirit of Party

SERM. and Faction, may find Fault with us, if  
 VIII. we be not as sanguine in all the Differences, which happen in the World, and in the Societies of Christians, as they themselves are, and censure and reproach us, if we endeavour to moderate between contending Parties, and to bring them to Terms of Concord and Agreement, as those who are lukewarm and indifferent, or Betrayers of their Country, and of the Cause of God. But this need not much move or disturb us; It is only the Censure of Men, blinded by the Rage of their own rash and uncharitable Zeal. Our Saviour, who knew to speak of all Persons with the utmost Truth and Propriety, hath set the Peace-makers in a more amiable and honourable Light, when he tells us, that they are *the Children of God*; that they discover something Godlike in their Temper and Conduct, and act up to the Dignity of a divine and heavenly Extraction. Whatever then may be the Opinion of Men concerning us, and whatever Difficulties we may find in the Way to Peace, let us notwithstanding, always sincerely desire and vigorously pursue

pursue it. And now, may *the Father of Lights, and the God of Peace, endow all of us, with that Wisdom, which cometh down from above ; which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy. To him, be Glory for ever. Amen.*

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## S E R M O N IX.

Of the Blessedness of the Per-  
secuted.

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MATTHEW V. 10, 11, 12.

*Blessed are they, which are persecuted for  
Righteousness sake : For their's is the  
Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are ye, when Men shall revile you,  
and persecute you, and shall say all  
Manner of Evil against you, falsely, for  
my Sake.*

*Rejoice and be exceeding glad ; for great  
is your Reward in Heaven : For so per-  
secuted they the Prophets, which were  
before you.*

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**T**HERE is a great Deal said in the Writings of the New Testament, in Relation to the Case of Persecution: Many Warnings given to those, who were taking the Profession of the Gospel upon them, of the Certainty of its Approach; with Directions how to conduct themselves becomingly under it, and Consolations to support and animate them, in the midst of their greatest Sufferings. And indeed, considering the severe and terrible Trial, which the Faith and Patience of the first Christians were to meet with, from the Malice and Rage of Men, this was no more than was necessary, for carrying them through the calamitous Scene, in which they were to be involved; for making them to endure the Evils, which their Profession of the Truth, and their adherence to their Duty, would draw upon them, with that Firmness and Constancy, which would do Honour to their Religion, and secure to themselves the glorious Reward of their Sufferings. The great Consolation every where offered to them, under their Distresses,

treffes, was an Assurance upon their coming off victorious of a most noble Recompence, or a great Reward in the other World. This is what our Lord particularly proposeth, and promiseth to them in the Text. And accordingly we find that the Consideration and Prospect of this, had so great an Influence, in the early Ages of Christianity, as to endow Multitudes of Persons, of all Ranks, Ages, and Conditions, with so much Resolution and Strength of Mind, as enabled them to encounter Dangers of all Kinds, for the Sake of their Religion, to out-brave all the Fury of their Persecutors, and instead of yielding, upon Account of their Sufferings, often most horrid and barbarous, to think themselves happy under them, and even *to rejoice for being accounted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ.*

It is certainly very happy for us, that we do not live in such *perilous Times*, as fell to the Lot of the primitive Disciples of our Saviour, and likewise of many of his faithful Followers in later Ages; but that we can make a Profession of his Religion, and perform every  
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Part of our Christian Duty, without meeting with any great Molestation, or Inconvenience, either from the Designs of particular evil Men, or from the Violence and Cruelty of the oppressive and tyrannical Powers of this World: Yet, we are not to think ourselves unconcerned in the Doctrine of suffering Persecution for the Sake of Religion. For though we should never be called to go through *the fiery Trial*, or to suffer any great Evils for our Adherence to the Cause of Truth and Righteousness, still a Spirit of Martyrdom, or a Disposition to part with all the Possessions and Enjoyments of this World, even with Life itself, and to submit to any Hardships and Miseries, that human Nature can at all bear, for giving our Testimony to the Cause of God, and for keeping a pure Conscience, is essential to the Character of a true Disciple of Christ; which, therefore, we should carefully cherish and cultivate in ourselves. Besides, if we should be in no Danger of being exposed to the more grievous Kinds of Persecution; yet, as *all, who will live godly in Christ Jesus, at any Time,*

Time, *must suffer Persecution* in some Manner, and in some Degree, or other, from the Malignity of bad Men, who are very apt to hate, reproach, and calumniate all, who *run not into the same Excess of Riot*, or of any other Kind of Wickedness with themselves; we should be prepared for meeting with such Treatment, and for bearing with Calmness and Equanimity, the Indignities and Abuses, which may be offered to us for a strictly conscientious Care of our Behaviour.

In discoursing farther upon this Subject, I shall consider;

I. What is included in the Character of the Persons, who are persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness, and of those who are reviled, calumniated and persecuted for the Sake of our Saviour.

II. What the Happiness is which belongeth to such, and the Grounds which they have for rejoicing, under all their Distresses and Sufferings.

First, I shall consider what is included in the Character of the Persons, *who are persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness*; and of those, *who are reviled, calumniated,*

SERM. *lumniated, and persecuted for the Sake of*  
 IX. *our Saviour.*



The Persons *persecuted for the Sake of Righteousness*, are in general all those, who suffer in their Property, Reputation, Liberty, Health, or Life, for their inviolable Attachment to the Profession of the Truth, and the Practice of Virtue. And they who are reviled, reproached, and persecuted for the Sake of Christ, are those, who suffer in their good Name, and other valuable Interests in the World, for their sincere Belief of the Gospel, and their firm Adherence *to the Truth as it is in Jesus*, and their strict Performance of every Part of their Duty. And as our Saviour was the great Oracle of God to Men, who instructed them, both in the Principles and Duties of Religion, the being persecuted for his Sake, in any Countries, where his Religion is known and professed in Purity, is comprehensive of all Kinds of Persecution. And therefore we find, that there are but seldom any other Instances of Persecution, mentioned in the New Testament, than the Injuries

and



and Sufferings, which Men endured for the Name of Christ.

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Now in the Character of those, who are thus persecuted, the following Particulars seem to be necessarily comprehended.

1. That they have a clear and firm Persuasion of the Truth and Justice of the Cause, for which they suffer. Without this, their Sufferings, so far from being meritorious, would be only Phrensy, or Madness. The lawful Possessions and Enjoyments of the World, the innocent Pleasures, and Comforts of Life, are by far too valuable, to be lightly, or wantonly thrown away. The taking Care of them, is not only a Thing, to which we are determined, from the common Desires and Instincts of human Nature, but is plainly a Duty, which we owe to the great Bestower of them, who expecteth, that we should preserve and use them, so long as we can do so, by fair and honourable Means, for our Support and Encouragement, in performing the Service, which he requireth at our Hands. A wise Man, therefore, will not part with them, but for

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a very urgent and sufficient Reason, which outweigheth all private Considerations, for his retaining them. He will ward off Persecution, as long as he can, by any Methods, that are lawful and justifiable; which will be to act, in Conformity both to the Dictates of Nature, and to the Directions of our Lord: But when Things are brought to this Issue, that he must either go through a Scene of the most grievous Sufferings, or betray the Cause of true Religion, and fail in the Allegiance and Duty which he oweth to God, and our Saviour, there is then no longer Room for Hesitation. A Sacrifice of all our worldly Interests, in this Case, will, indeed, be an Act of the most sublime and heroic Virtue, a Duty most indispensably required by the supreme and commanding Faculty in our Minds, in performing which, though accompanied with the greatest outward Uneasiness, we shall have a Perception of an inward Dignity and Worth, with a firm Confidence and Hope in God: Whereas by neglecting it, we shall in a little Time, if we have any good Principles remaining

*Of the Blessedness of the Persecuted.*

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remaining in us, become disagreeable to ourselves, and destroy all the Peace and Comfort of the after Part of our Lives.

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Now there can be really but little Difficulty, when we are harrassed and persecuted upon the Account of Religion, in assuring ourselves of the Truth and Goodness of the Cause, for which we suffer. If we are brought into Tribulation, for our adhering to the Principles of natural Religion, and the common Duties of Morality; These are all accompanied with such Light and Force of Evidence, and indeed have such a deep Root in the Constitution of our Nature, that we must both see, and feel, that they are well-founded. If we be abused and injured for making a Profession of the Gospel, in its Simplicity and Purity, we may likewise easily and clearly discern, that we are suffering in the Cause of the God of Truth, if we will but seriously consider the Nature of the Christian Doctrine itself, and attend to the many indubitable solemn Attestations, which were given to the Divine Mission of our Lord. Or, if we should be run down and oppressed,

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for holding what we take to be important Principles, or Doctrines of Christianity, though by others deemed to be Errors and Heresies, we may, at least in most Cases of this Sort, be fully satisfied, whether our Notions are true, or otherwise : If the Principles, which we hold, and for which we are brought into Distress, be among the fundamental, or essential Doctrines of the Gospel, all these are so clearly and distinctly laid down in the sacred Writings, that it is hardly possible for an attentive honest Mind to be mistaken about them. Or, if the Principles, for which we are ill-treated, should not be of so high a Rank, nor founded upon irresistible Evidence, still it is to be hoped, that by the Blessing of God, upon our sincere and diligent Researches, we shall be led into the Truth, and freed from all dangerous and hurtful Mistakes concerning them. Or, suppose the worst that can befall us, if we be candid and sincere, that we have really fallen into an Error, in some inferior Point of Christian Doctrine, where, however, after our best Inquiries, we think that we hold  
and



and maintain the Truth; as in this Case, our Error is involuntary, and as we cannot, before we are convinced of its being an Error, renounce it innocently; if we are severely and hardly dealt with, upon the Account of it, we may be sure that we suffer upon a good Ground; and that whatever bad Usage Men may think fit to give us, God will accept and reward us, for our Integrity and our Desire and Intention to approve ourselves his faithful Servants.

Thus should the Persecuted take care to ascertain to themselves, the Truth and Justice of the Cause, for which they suffer; lest instead of honouring God by their Conduct, they only offer him *the Sacrifice of Fools*, and instead of doing something, which is really worthy and commendable, they act a Part quite absurd and irrational, unworthy of human Nature, and greatly dishonourable to it.

Another Thing in the Character of the Persecuted is, that they entertain a sincere Affection to the Cause, for which they suffer. That a Man may be really a Martyr, or a truly pious Confessor



SERM. upon the Account of Religion, he must  
 IX. have, not only a Conviction of the  
 Truth and Reasonableness of it, in his  
 Mind, but an high Esteem, a thorough  
 Approbation, and a strong Love of it in  
 his Heart. It is very possible to conceive, that one may have a clear Conviction of the Truth of the Gospel, and Resolution enough, to go a great Length in suffering for the Profession of it, rather than to renounce, or deny it; and yet, that he may be deficient in that cordial Attachment to it, which is necessary to make his Profession of it to turn to any valuable Account to him. One would certainly be loth to suspect a Person, for wanting a proper Regard to Religion, who giveth such a strong Proof of his Zeal for it, as to endure bitter and grievous Calamities for the Sake of it: But however becoming it is in By-standers, to judge in the most favourable Way that they can, of the Persecuted; yet, the Fact is undeniable, that many have suffered greatly for an external Profession of the Gospel, and some even to Extremity, of whom it is no Uncharitableness to say, that they had not the

genuine

genuine Spirit of Christianity in them, as appeared too plainly from the gross Immoralities, which were to be found in their Lives, with which an uniform prevailing Love of the Institution of our Saviour is utterly inconsistent. Nay, *St. Paul* hath put this very Case, that a Man may give his Body to be burned for the Cause of God, or of the Truth, and yet be destitute of that Charity, or that sincere Love of God, and of Mankind, which is necessary to render such a Sacrifice of himself acceptable. Nor is this Conduct in Men, hard to be accounted for: A natural Bravery and Impetuosity of Temper; a Point of Honour, in not being menaced, or frightened out of the Religion, in which they have been educated, by those who have no Right to compel them; with the Heat and Enthusiasm of their Party, which are apt to rise high upon such Occasions, may make them to expose themselves to very grievous Distresses, and to behave with great Fortitude under them, for the Profession of Religion, though, perhaps, they neither understand the Merits of it, nor have felt the

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true Force and Influence of it upon their Hearts. But however these Actions may sometimes raise Surprize and Admiration in the Spectators, yet, they will never make the Performers of them, to pass for Martyrs, or Sufferers for pure Religion, in the Sight of God. The ingenuous and noble Principles of Respect and Love, must be at the Root both of our active, and passive Obedience to the Will of God, to give them a real Worth, and to render them agreeable and well-pleasing to him.

3. Lastly, in the Character of those, who worthily suffer Persecution for the Sake of Righteousness, or for the Sake of the Gospel, the Exercise of several inward good Principles and Affections, is included: Such as a lively Faith in God, and a sure Dependence upon him; a firm Belief, and a confident Expectation of a future State; an earnest Desire to get rid of all Vice, with a Disposition to attain to the highest Degree of all moral and christian Excellence and Perfection. The Reason why Faith and Confidence in God, and a Belief and Hope of a future State, must be supposed

posed to be Ingredients in the Temper of those, who worthily endure Persecution, is, because a Scene of severe and extreme Persecution is so shocking and dreadful to Nature, that without the Support derived from these Principles, not many would be able to struggle through it; the greatest Part of Men, without the Aids of Religion, would certainly faint, and sink under it. Some few hardy and inflexible Spirits, such as were mentioned before, from a peculiar Cast in the natural Temper of their Minds, and some strong enthusiastic Notions possessing them, may hold out long against all the Violence and Rage of Persecution, without receiving much Assistance from any rational Principles of Piety, or any lively Consideration of another World. But this is a Conflict, to which human Nature, in such a Situation, would in the greatest Number of Instances be quite unequal. And, therefore, we find, that at least pious and good Men, in all Times of deep Distress, betake themselves to God, as *their Refuge and Strength*, and that *they are not afraid of evil Tidings, because*  
*their*

**SERM.** *their Hearts are fixed, trusting in the*  
**IX.** *Lord. And that they are directed upon*  
 the Approach of Persecution, *to sanctify*  
*the Lord God in their Hearts, to enter-*  
*tain just and becoming Sentiments of the*  
*Wisdom, Power, Righteousness, and*  
*Goodness of the great Governor of the*  
*World; to have the highest Esteem and*  
*Veneration of these Perfections of his,*  
*and to depend upon them, as fully suffi-*  
*cient for supporting and comforting them*  
*under the greatest Sufferings, which the*  
*Profession of their Religion can bring*  
*upon them: And when they suffer ac-*  
*cording to the Will of God, to commit the*  
*Keeping of their Souls to him, as unto a*  
*faithful Creator. And we find, that they*  
*can patiently bear the Sufferings of this*  
*present Time, upon the Account of Re-*  
*ligion, because they reckon them not wor-*  
*thy to be compared with the Glory, which*  
*shall be revealed in them: And that they*  
*faint not under their Afflictions, which*  
*however severe they may sometimes be,*  
*yet will soon come to a Period, and in*  
*the mean Time, work for them, a far*  
*more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glo-*  
*ry: While they look not at the Things,*  
*which*



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*which are seen ; but at the Things, which are not seen : For the Things which are seen, are temporal, but the Things which are not seen, are eternal.*

And besides the Exercise of all these great Principles of Religion, there must be included in the Temper of those, who suffer Persecution, for the Sake of the Gospel, in the Manner that becometh them, a Disposition to get rid of all Sin, and to arrive at the highest Degree of all Virtue, and of universal Righteousness. For what could be more absurd, than for a Man to practise all the most difficult and painful Duties of Religion, even those, which Flesh and Blood are apt to shudder at the Thoughts of, and yet to neglect Duties, which have nothing burthen some and grievous, harsh and disagreeable to our uncorrupted Nature in them ? or, what could be more preposterous in him, than to aspire to the Crown of Martyrdom, the worthy Acquisition of which, is the most sublime and honourable Atchievement of which any one is capable, and at the same Time, to suffer his Nature to be contaminated, and his Character debased,

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fed, by his giving Way to some low Appetite, or Lust? These Things are plainly incompatible and inconsistent: And therefore if any Man wilfully indulgeth any evil Desires in himself, he must certainly give up all Pretensions to the glorious Character of a Martyr. Indeed the truest Spirit of Martyrdom itself, is not sufficient to exempt a Man, from all moral Imperfections and Blemishes: These, in the present State of Humanity, will always more or less, cleave to him. But so much may certainly be expected from it, as to make him very solicitous and careful, not to lose the Merit and Honour of his Sufferings, for the Sake of any mean and unmanly Gratifications; and to render his Conduct uniform, and of a Piece, every Part of it contributing somewhat to the supreme Dignity and Happiness of his Nature.

II. I shall proceed now to consider, what the Happiness is, which is promised to the Persecuted, and the Reasons which they have for rejoicing, under all their Distresses and Sufferings.

The

The Account which our Saviour giveth us of their Happiness, is, that *Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; and that great is *their Reward in Heaven*.

As God in our original Formation, hath laid a Foundation for his moral Dominion over us, the primary Notion of his Kingdom, or which is the same Thing, of the Kingdom of Heaven, consisteth in that Government which God exerciseth over Men, as rational moral Agents: And as this Dominion of God over Mankind, is not only recognised, but strongly confirmed, and greatly promoted by the Dispensation of Christianity, the State of the Gospel, is, therefore, very commonly and properly, called the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. But as the moral Dominion, or Empire of God, over the Minds and Consciences of Men, is not confined within the Bounds of this Life, nor will end with the Dispensation of the Gospel; as it will certainly extend itself to another World, and will indeed shine out most eminently, after the End hath come, when our Saviour shall have *delivered up the Kingdom*, in which he  
now

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now ruleth, *to the Father*, and God himself will be *all in all*; the Kingdom of God, or of Heaven, which hath its Beginning in the Constitution of human Nature, and is carried to a great Height, under the Administration of the Gospel, must always be supposed to refer to, and ultimately to terminate in this more advanced and glorious State of the divine Authority and Government in a future World. This then is the Kingdom of Heaven, which our Saviour assureth us, belongeth to the Persecuted: The Import of which is, that they shall be accounted most worthy and eminent Members of the Church of God; Disciples of the highest Form, in the School of Christ; that they shall be invested with the most distinguishing Privileges and Honours of the Kingdom of Grace upon Earth; and shall afterwards be exalted to the Kingdom of Glory in Heaven; where they shall arrive at a State of the highest Dignity and Happiness, which any of the Sons of Men can attain to; where they shall meet with the joyful Acclamations, and most affectionate

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Congratulations of Angels, and other good Spirits, and receive from God himself, the Governor and Judge of all, such clear Tokens of his Approbation and Favour, as will do the most ample Justice to their Characters, and yield them the most pure and satisfying Pleasure for evermore. Our Saviour adds, that *great is their Reward in Heaven.*

That there will be very different Degrees, both of Rewards and Punishments in another World, is a Point so evident, that it will not, I believe, be contested. And the Rule, or Standard, by which these will be adjusted and proportioned, is a greater, or smaller Measure of Virtue, or of Vice in Men. The Persons, therefore, who have been most eminently good and worthy in this World, will be most highly honoured and rewarded in the next. And as they, who have endured Persecution becomingly; who, from a pure Love of God, and for the Sake of a good Conscience, have given up all their Enjoyments in Life, and have gone through all Manner of Indignities, Reproaches, Tortures, and Oppressions, and have even *resisted unto Blood,*



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*Blood, with Patience and Constancy; as these, I say, have given the clearest and strongest Proofs of the Prevalence of the best Principles and Affections in them, they, of all Men, are best entitled to a most bright and glorious Crown in a future State; which is indeed ascertained and secured to them, by the repeated Declarations and Promises of him, who cannot lie. Some general Representation of the high Honours, and perfect Happiness, which await them, is laid before us, in one of the Visions of St. John; These are they who came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve him Day and Night in his Temple; and he that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any Heat: For the Lamb, that is in the Midst of the Throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them to living Fountains of Waters: And God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes.*

This

This is a short Account of the Blessedness of the Persecuted: And in the Prospect of this alone, we may see, that they have Reason enough *to rejoice, and to be exceeding glad*, under all their Calamities and Miseries. For what *though they may be in Heaviness, for a Season*, as St. Peter speaks, *through the manifold Temptations*, or severe Trials, which befall them; yet, when they know, that these shall soon be over, and that the patient enduring of them, will open the Way to them, into the everlasting Kingdom of God, and will even raise them, to the upper and more glorious Mansions, which are in their Father's House; when they are assured, that for all the Losses, which they sustain, and for all the Sufferings, to which they submit, they shall *receive an hundred Fold*, in an inexpressible Peace and Joy of Heart, and the most delightful Hope of the Favour of God, *now in this Time*; and in the *World to come*, a larger Portion of the heavenly Dignity and Felicity; surely, these Considerations may reconcile them to their Lot, how grievous and disastrous soever it may be, and make them, instead of

SERM. murmuring and complaining, to think  
 IX. themselves happy in their Situation, and  
 obliged to Providence, for having given  
 them the Opportunity of doing greater  
 Honour to Religion, and of having both  
 secured and increased their own highest  
 and most lasting Happiness.

The Persecuted have moreover Reason  
 to rejoice in the Consciousness of their  
 Integrity; in having been tried, and  
 found faithful; and in knowing that *the*  
*Trial of their Faith, more precious than*  
*that of Gold, which perisheth, will be found*  
*to their Praise, and Honour, and Glory,*  
*at the Appearing of Jesus Christ*; in hav-  
 ing acquired a Temper of Virtue, pure,  
 solid, and immoveable, which having  
 stood out against the rudest Shocks, and  
 fiercest Assaults of the Enemies of their  
 Salvation, will be impregnable to all  
 lower Temptations, and enable them to  
 make a continual Progress in Goodness,  
 and to arrive, as far as it is attainable by  
 them, at the Height of Christian Per-  
 fection.

There is still another Ground for Re-  
 joicing to those, who endure Persecu-  
 tion worthily, which is that their Names  
 must

*Of the Blessedness of the Persecuted.*

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must stand high in the Rolls of Honour, and that they have put themselves upon a Level with Men of the most illustrious Characters of all preceding Ages; that *they are Brethren, and Companions in Tribulation*, with the holy Prophets, and all other good Men, who from the Foundation of the World, have suffered for the Sake of Truth and Right; that they rank and figure in *the noble Army of Martyrs*, in the Cause of Christianity, and are in some Measure like to *the Captain of our Salvation* himself, who *was made perfect by his Sufferings*.

It is however certain, that the Sufferings of the Persecuted, may be sometimes so intense and oppressive, as to render them quite incapable of those Acts of Reflection, which are necessary to their deriving that Consolation and Joy from their Situation, which otherwise it would naturally afford to them. But in any Intervals of Ease which they may have, in any of their calm and quiet Hours, they cannot but be sensible of their being in a State, most worthy and excellent; which will give them a noble Sensation of an internal Dignity, and

SERM. yield them *that Peace, which passeth all*  
 IX. *Understanding, and a Hope full of Immor-*  
 ~~~~~ *tality.*

I shall conclude with some few Observations and Reflections upon what hath been discoursed.

1. We may take Notice of the Perverseness and Disingenuity of some Cavillers at the Doctrine of our Saviour, who have alledged, among other Instances, that this Declaration of his in the Text, concerning the Happiness of the Persecuted, hath something very paradoxical, or absurd in it, contrary both to the Feelings of Nature, and to the Dictates of common Sense. But hereby they discover, only their own Want of Judgment, or of Candour. For what Man of Reflection and Fairness of Mind, can ever think, that by Persecution, our Saviour meant merely the submitting to some outward Pains and Sufferings, and that he intended to represent this as a Matter of great Merit, and full of Joy and Happiness to Men; which is the Sense, which they who charge his Doctrine with Absurdity, put upon his Words. Is it not clear,

clear, that what he had in View, is really a Spirit of Martyrdom, or a Temper, which freely disposeth a Man, to part with all his worldly Interests, even with Life, rather than to desert, or betray the Cause of true Religion? This Temper is the Thing, which our Lord approves and commends, as truly worthy and great, as glorious and honourable, and fruitful, in the Issue, of the most consummate Happiness to those who possess it. And such it will certainly appear to be, to all who seriously attend to it, and have those previous Sentiments and Principles, which are necessary to their judging truly of it.

2. From what hath been discoursed, it is plain, that no Objection can lie against the Administration of Providence, on Account of the Afflictions and Persecutions of righteous and good Men in this World. For though these have often proved a Stumbling-block to many Persons of pious and honest Hearts, making them to doubt of the Equity of the divine Government, and filling their Minds, with Gloom and Melancholy; yet, all this hath proceeded only from

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too short a View of Things ; from not considering that the Scene now before our Eyes, is but the Beginning of a Scheme, which will extend itself into the remotest Futurity, where all the Confusions and Irregularities in the present Conduct of human Affairs, will be easily set right ; or rather, where what we now call Confusions and Disorders, will no longer have that Appearance, but will be all seen, to be only the unavoidable Consequences of a Plan, which perfect Wisdom and Goodness had calculated for the greatest Happiness of the Universe ; and where the Losses and Sufferings of good Men in the Cause of Virtue, will be to the Height of all their Wishes, compensated and made up to them. It is certain, that a State of perfect Order, and equal Retribution, clearly established, and firmly believed, must remove every Difficulty of this Sort, and diffuse Light and Serenity, Joy and Gladness over the Face of the Creation, and make every Man, who suffereth in a good Cause, to acquiesce, and to be contented ; as he knoweth, that for some Pains, which even in their worst State,

are

are but slight and transient, upon a Comparison, with what he expecteth; he is to receive a Reward, most pure and satisfying in its Nature, and infinite in its Duration.

3. From what hath been said, we may see how much it concerneth us to be always ready, and prepared to submit to any Persecutions in the Service of God, and in the Cause of true Religion. Because this Temper is most worthy and laudable, and upon the whole, productive of the highest Happiness, to those, in whom it prevaieth. I do not mean by this, that we are to court Persecution, or to throw ourselves unnecessarily in the Way of it: This was an Error not uncommon among the primitive Christians, many of whom, in their great Ardor to obtain the Crown of Martyrdom, defeated their own End, by acting a Part, quite unnatural and foolish, and involving themselves, in some Degree at least, in the Guilt of their own Blood. It is certainly our Duty to avoid Persecution, as long as we can innocently do so; but when that ceases to be the Case, we must encounter any Kind, or Degree of it,

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with which Providence shall think fit to try us, calmly and meekly, and bear it with Fortitude and Magnanimity; having all along an humble Dependence upon God, for aiding and supporting us, and likewise taking to ourselves, *for an Example of suffering Affliction, and of Patience, the Prophets and Apostles;* and above all, *looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame, and is now set down at the right Hand of the Throne of God.*

Thanks be to Heaven, that we have so little Reason, to apprehend our being exposed to the severer Kinds of Persecution, or that it will be ever necessary for us, *to resist unto Blood*, for our Profession of the Gospel. But as a Disposition to undergo any Hardships and Sufferings, in the Cause of Truth and Righteousness, is a necessary Ingredient in the Character of every Christian, who aimeth at Perfection, it certainly becometh us, to raise and strengthen it, very carefully in ourselves. Besides, as there is an Instability in all human Affairs, and

as the State in which we are, as to the Profession of our Religion, though at present very calm and quiet, may soon be changed, and we may be surrounded with Alarms and Fears of grievous Persecutions; a prudent and good Man, will always chuse to be armed and fortified against these. And as even in the most settled and peaceable Times of Religion, good Men may always expect much ill Usage, at least in the Way of Insult, Scoffing, and Derision, from the desperately Wicked and Abandoned, for their strict Adherence to their Duty; every one should learn how to bear those lower Instances of Persecution, with a becoming Dignity, Composure, and Firmness of Mind.

Lastly, As God hath not hitherto thought fit to exact from us, a Performance of the most severe and difficult Duties of Religion, we should, certainly, more readily and chearfully comply with his Will, in all other Particulars. Let us, therefore, set about the Mortification even of our most favourite Corruptions, and most beloved Lusts, which however grievous and painful it may be,
yet,

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yet, is never to be laid in the Balance with the Task, which he hath often imposed upon others of his faithful Servants, *that of taking up the-Cross, and following our Saviour*, through the whole Train of his Sufferings. As we happily live in a State of Tranquility in the World, and are free from all grievous Oppressions in Religion, let us improve the Opportunities and Advantages, which we have, for freeing ourselves from all inward Tyranny; for throwing off the Dominion of every imperious Appetite and Passion, and becoming more intirely and uniformly the Servants of God. As we can make a Profession of the Gospel, in its utmost Purity, without Molestation, or Danger, let us study to adorn our holy Profession, by a Conversation, in all Respects, agreeable to it, and to have the true Spirit of our Religion formed in us, producing in us all *the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the Glory and Praise of God.* Thus shall we at last, *receive the End of all our Faith, Patience, and Labour in the Lord, even the Salvation of our Souls.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X.

The Character of Christians as
the Salt of the Earth.

MATTHEW V. 13.

*Ye are the Salt of the Earth: but if the
Salt hath lost its Savour, wherewith
shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good
for nothing, but to be cast out, and
trodden under Foot of Men.*

OUR Saviour, having finished his
Declarations concerning the true
Happiness of Men, and pointed out the
Way, which leadeth to it, in the Ex-
ercise of all morally good Qualities and
Affections; proceedeth to inform his
Disciples, that in Consequence of their
Profession

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Profession of his Religion, they were to be of an eminent and distinguished Character for all Virtue; that they were to be, not only good, but remarkable for their Goodness, and by the Excellence and Sublimity of their Sentiments and Principles, and by an universally worthy and shining Conversation, they were to illuminate and instruct, and to purify and enliven the World. This he doth, by comparing them, first, *to the Salt of the Earth*, and Secondly, *to the Light of the World*.

Ye, saith he, in the Words of the Text, *are the Salt of the Earth*. And as the Properties of Salt are, to preserve from Corruption and Putrefaction, to cleave and purify, and to give a Poignancy and Relish to the Things to which it is applied, our Saviour's Meaning is, that his Followers should be free so far as it is possible, from every moral Blemish and Imperfection; that no prevailing Corruption should appear in them; that they should be perfectly sincere and upright in Heart, and holy in all Manner of Conversation; and that by the Influence of their sound

Doctrine,

Doctrines, and engaging Example, they should reform and refine the Manners of their Neighbours, and diffuse a Spirit of genuine Piety and Virtue, among all around them.

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God, in his original Constitution of our Nature, hath infused into every Man, a certain Proportion of what may be called the Salt of Life, a Sense of Good and Evil, of Just and Unjust, of Right and Wrong. This divine Sense, including a Discernment of Virtue, and of Vice, with an Approbation of the one, and a dislike of the other, assisted by our Reason, and strengthened by the Principles of Religion, may be a Source of the most pure and illustrious Virtue in us: If it be indeed duly cultivated and improved, it will undoubtedly raise us up to a great Height of Goodness, inspire us with the most noble Sentiments and Passions, give a most amiable and pleasing Appearance to our Actions, and make our Conversation and Manners highly Savoury and Agreeable to all who observe them. And in fact, this Principle, as it is inseparable from our Constitution, and is
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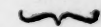
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never to be wholly extinguished in the Mind, always produceth some good Acts in the worst of Men, and is plainly the Cause of the greatest Part of that Virtue, which is to be found in the World. However, as Mankind have been usually very negligent in the Cultivation of this excellent Faculty; nay, as they have been, not only careless in improving it, but have wilfully impaired and corrupted it, by acting contrary to its Directions, and suffering the inferiour Principles in their Constitution to usurp upon it, and to bear it down; it hath been always the Business of those, who were desirous of their Reformation, and of the Prevalence of Virtue among them, to do what they could, to awaken and strengthen this Faculty in them; to keep the Notices of Good, and of Evil, originally given to them, clear and distinct in their Minds, and to encrease their Desire and Love of the one, and their Dislike and Hatred of the other. Indeed the principal View of those, who, in ancient Times, were trusted with the Education of Youth, and the Formation of their Manners, was to establish

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blish the rational and moral Power, the Guide of Life, and the Fountain of Virtue, in its natural State of Supremacy in the Mind, and to give it the Masterhip over all the other Powers and Principles of Action in them. And some of them, it is certain, laboured very successfully in this Matter; having produced Pupils, who did Honour, not only to their Instructors, but to human Nature itself, by exhibiting in their Conduct, an Example of the most noble, solid, and shining Virtue. It must at the same Time, be confessed, that the Instances of this Sort, were extremely rare, in Comparison of the gross Multitude of Men, who after all that could be done for reclaiming and amending them, lay in a very degenerate and corrupted State. Though the originally good Principles implanted in human Nature, were always sufficient to prevent the World's being deluged, or overwhelmed with Wickedness, to keep some Sense of Virtue and of moral Obligations, alive in the Minds of many, indeed of the greatest Part of Men, and upon the whole, to settle them, in a State

SERM. State of at least tolerable Order, and social Happiness; yet, were never effectual, without some extraordinary Assistance, to produce any Thing like an uniform Course of Righteousness, in the main Body of Men.

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It, therefore pleased God, to take the renovation of the moral World, into his own Hands, which, after some previous Steps, or preparatory Dispensations, he fully accomplished by the Promulgation of the Gospel: which, wherever it is well understood, and sincerely embraced, must necessarily arouse, and invigorate all the leading Powers in the human Mind, and give them the greatest Influence over the Affections and Behaviour of Men. Indeed the Doctrine of our Saviour is so perfectly agreeable to the Notices originally given to us, of Good and Evil, every where recognising the essential Difference between them, and presenting to us the one, as the Object of our most earnest Love, and highest Delight, and the other, as a Matter of perfect Hatred and Aversion to us; it falleth in so directly with the Byass and Tendency of our incorrupted
and



and best Affections, by proposing such lovely and alluring Objects to them, as cannot but mightily gain upon them, and most powerfully strike and move them ; and it addeth such a Force to all the Springs of Nature, in the Performance of our Duty, by several Discoveries, which it maketh, and particularly, to mention nothing else at present, by the clear Discovery, and undoubted Assurance, which it giveth of a future State ; that if we but truly comprehend, and seriously and affectionately receive it, it cannot but raise us to a great Sublimity and Eminency in Virtue, and render us most prompt and expert, and most active and zealous in every good Work.

The Effect of the Gospel, at the first Publication of it, upon a most profligate and wicked Generation of Men, whom, from the lowest Condition with respect to Morals, into which they could be supposed to have fallen, it raised up to be eminent and illustrious Patterns of all Piety and Goodness, was very wonderful, and gave it a most lovely Appearance, and a distinguished Glory : And the same, or like Effect, it will, and

SERM. must still produce in all who receive it with
X a true Faith and Love and give them-
selves up intirely to its Influence and
Direction; making them good as Indi-
viduals, good as Members of Society,
good in all Stations and Relations in
Life. The Religion of our Saviour, if
rationally and affectionately embraced,
will inspire Men with a Zeal to culti-
vate and improve the noble Powers,
which the Author of their Beings hath
bestowed on them, and to advance their
Nature to the highest Excellence and
Perfection in Virtue. It will dispose
them to be Lovers of Mankind, and of
their Country, and to take the utmost
Pleasure in contributing to their Happi-
ness. It will make them to consult the
Welfare of the Communities to which
they belong, and of the Neighbour-
hoods where they live, and to establish
them, as much as they can, in a State
of Amity, Peace, and good Order. It
will give them a Love of Truth and
Justice, and render them Protectors of
the Poor and Oppressed, and indeed ge-
neral Benefactors upon all Occasions,
according to the full Extent of their Abi-
lities.

lities. It will infuse into Rulers and Magistrates a Spirit of Justice and Equity, and a Concern for the Happiness of those, who are to be protected and governed by them, and influence all who are subject to their Authority, to reverence and honour them, and to support and assist them readily, in the Execution of their Offices. It will animate the Persons joined together in the sacred Bond of Wedlock, with a pure, tender, and generous Affection towards each other, and make them to do every Thing in their Power, for their mutual Comfort and Happiness. It will add to the natural Affection of Parents to their Children, and make them particularly watchful and careful, in the most important Affair of giving them a religious and virtuous Education; and will engage Children on their Part, to make all suitable Returns of Duty, Gratitude, and Obedience. It will make Masters equitable, gentle, and kind to their Servants; and Servants, faithful, careful, and diligent in the Service of their Masters. In a Word, the Principles of Religion, as inculcated by Christianity, truly un-

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understood, and thoroughly imbibed and digested, will restrain all in whom they are, from all Vice, and even from all Appearances of it, will engage them to every Branch of Virtue, will indeed give them a peculiar Delicacy in all Points, wherein good Morals are concerned, and make them to abound and to excel in all Goodness; rendering their Conversation most salutary and beneficial, and most pleasing and delightful, both to themselves and others.

These are Effects, which the true Spirit of Christianity, must always produce, more or less, in all, who are endowed with it: But still its Influence will be more remarkable upon some, than upon others; upon those, for Instance, who have been originally well formed for the Practice of Virtue, who have a delicate moral Sense, and great Generosity of Affection, laid strong in their Nature; who have a refined Taste, and a liberal Cast of Mind; who have had the Advantage of a liberal Education, and are acquainted with the Principles of those Arts and Sciences, which have a Connexion with good Morals; and



and upon the Persons, who by their Characters, Offices, Rank, and Situation in the World, are raised above the rude and gross Mass of Mankind, and who, if they be at all worthy of the Privileges and Distinctions, which have been bestowed upon them, must have Qualities in them, which will make them very susceptible of all Virtue ; I mean Princes, Legislators, Magistrates and Ministers of public Justice, the Nobility and higher Gentry, and the several Orders of Pastors and Teachers in the Christian Church. Upon all these, it may be expected that the Religion of the Gospel, if it be rationally and cordially believed and received by them, will have Force enough, to render them both sincerely and conspicuously good, to make them very good in themselves, and Instruments of much good to others ; to inspire them, with a Zeal, to make all they converse with, and over whom they have any Authority and Influence, wise and virtuous ; and to give a great Energy to their Endeavours for that Purpose ; to add a peculiar Liveliness and Seasoning to their Instruction, and an irresistible Charm and Attraction to their Example.

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And thus doth Christianity, by coinciding and co-operating with the original Principles and Springs of Virtue in our Constitution; by its reviving, strengthening, and invigorating these, and by its giving a new additional Force to them mould its Professors into a Spirit and Temper, which must engage them to a Course of universal Righteousness, and produce in them, all the Acts of the most generous and sublime Virtue: which layeth the justest Foundation for comparing them, *to the Salt of the Earth*. The Truth is, it is in a great Measure owing to the Influence of Men of eminent Goodness, that the Affairs of the moral World do not stagnate and putrify; that the Manners of Men, instead of exhibiting something of an amiable and pleasing Appearance, are not quite nauseous and distasteful; and that instead of Mankind's sinking into a State of Indolence and Insipidity, or rather of great Wretchedness and Misery, there is still much Vigour and Activity, and a great deal of Comfort and Happiness subsisting among them. It is indeed certain, that human Nature can

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never so universally and totally degenerate, as that there should be no Virtue, no social Order, no Happiness among Men: But it is to be considered, that no small Share of what we find of these among them, dependeth upon the Instructions and Persuasions, the Example and good Behaviour of wise and virtuous Men; and that if the Influence of these should be withdrawn, Mankind would immediately be found to be in a much more corrupted State, than they are in, and that they would be continually waxing worse: Infomuch, that the World would soon become intolerable, a most undesirable, melancholy and distressing Place, to any, who might still *have their spiritual Senses some way properly exercised*; who would never be able to bear those monstrous and shocking Scenes of Sin and Folly, of Wickedness and Misery, which would every where occur, and who would be apt to break out in that Wish, *O that I had Wings like a Dove; for then would I fly away, and be at Rest*: Nay, even bad Men themselves, must in a little Time, be tired of a State, in which Violence and Rapine, Confu-

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fion, Jealousy, and Distrust would reign ; in which there would be no Security for any Thing ; where all would be in constant Danger of being deprived of Life, or any other Part of their Property, notwithstanding any Protection that could be derived from Laws, which in the Case we are supposing, would probably be neither well contrived, nor well executed. It is certain, that the most profligate and abandoned of Mankind, owe much of their external Quiet and Safety, to the good Principles and Virtues of their Neighbours, to those very Principles and Virtues in others, with which they are at Enmity, and which they will not cherish and cultivate in themselves.

It is evident, therefore, that the Men of Integrity and Virtue, especially those, who are so eminent for Virtue, as Christianity maketh its Professors to be, are to be considered as shedding a benign and salutary Influence on Society, as animating the Affairs of Men, and putting them into a natural and agreeable Motion ; as keeping Vice and Immorality at Bay, and preserving those Mounds
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and Ramparts, the breaking down of which, would let in an Inundation of Corruption and Licentiousness, which would overwhelm the World, and carry away every Thing that is valuable among Men; which would soon render the Earth desolate, and Life no longer a Blessing to Mankind.

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I shall conclude with a few useful Instructions, from what hath been discoursed. And

1. In the first Place, from hence, we may see how truly Christianity is entitled to the Respect and Favour of Mankind. The Principles of pure Religion issuing from the Source of Nature alone, and producing their proper Effects in Men, have always an amiable and venerable Appearance, and never fail to command the Approbation and Love of all ingenuous Minds: The same Principles as revived and reinforced by the Institution of our Saviour, and bringing forth their lovely and admirable Fruits in the Hearts and Manners of Men, must still have a more striking Appearance, and make the deepest Impression on all, who seriously and unprejudicedly attend to them.

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If any Institution calculated for the Benefit of Men, is to be valued according to its excellent Tendency, and the substantially and permanently good Effects of it; the Institution of the Gospel must, certainly, stand highest in our Estimation; as it, far above all other Institutions, enobleth, elevateth, and sweeteneth human Nature, and maketh Men the most pure, perfect, useful, and happy Creatures, that they can possibly be in this World, and prepareth them for the divine Exercises and Enjoyments of an immortal Existence. The great Success of the Gospel, in the primitive Times of it, in reforming and sanctifying the Hearts and Conversations of Men, procured it *a Name, and a Praise in the whole Earth*, and contributed exceedingly to its Reputation and Advancement. This made our Religion to look venerable in the Eyes even of its Adversaries; and gave Occasion to its Friends to exult and triumph in its Behalf. And whenever Christianity recovereth its native Spirit and Vigour; that is, whenever the Professors of it, truly and heartily receive it, and suffer it to operate with

with its whole Force and Influence upon them, it will once more become the Admiration of the World, and be universally revered and honoured by Mankind.

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Secondly, From what hath been said, we may learn to esteem and honour all good Men, and particularly those of them, who are most remarkable for their Goodness. For beside the intrinsic Merit of these Men, which rendereth them very lovely and estimable, they are to be considered as the Supports and Pillars of Society; upon whom the Peace and Happiness of the World, in an high Degree, depend; who keep human Affairs in Order and Harmony, and throw Life and Spirit into them, who prevent their falling into Confusion, or their settling in a State, which would be quite nauseous and disagreeable; and which would soon become most grievous and intolerable. This is what may be justly affirmed of eminently pious and virtuous Men, not only from the natural Tendency of their Conduct, but from the Regard of the Governor of the World towards them, who, in several Instances, upon

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upon Record in the sacred Writings, hath honoured them so far, as upon their Intercession, to suspend the Execution of threatened Judgments, and to grant Favours to Men, which, but for them, would not have been conferred. Let us not, therefore, be carried away with any vulgar Prejudices, in the Judgments that we form of the real Merits of Men: Let us never be dazzled with the external Splendour of the Great, but who, at the same Time, are bad and worthless Men; nor ever be induced to despise and think meanly of the Righteous, in the lowest State, in which they may happen to be: On the contrary, let us account the Men of true Piety and Virtue, in all Circumstances, to *be more excellent than their Neighbours*, to be the Persons, who are the Ornaments of human Nature, and confer very substantial Benefits upon the World; and let us, accordingly, give them all the Praise and Honour due to their solid and useful Virtue.

Lastly, Let us be careful to acquire, and to cultivate in ourselves, the true Spirit of Religion: Not to content ourselves,

selves, with any formal customary Profession of it, nor with a Zeal for any Points of Speculation and Belief, nor with an Observance of any outward Rites and Forms, nor with any partial and incomplete Performance of our moral and Christian Duty; but let us labour after such a deep penetrating Sense of the great Truths of Religion, as will effectually arouse, and operate upon every Principle of Virtue in our Hearts, and rightly govern all our inward Thoughts and Desires, Purposes and Designs, and render our Conversation in Life, intirely pure and holy, exemplary and enlivening, shining and edifying. Thus shall we act up to the Character, which belongeth to all the true Disciples of our Saviour, of being *the Salt of the Earth*: And surely, if we have any Principle of Generosity, or any laudable Ambition in us, or any just Concern for our own Dignity and Happiness, we cannot but be fond of acting a Part in Life, which will enoble and exalt our Nature; which will give us the Honour of having a Share in the divine Administration, in effecting its most excellent and salutary Purposes with
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Respect to Mankind, which will lay the Foundation for reflecting upon ourselves with Peace and Comfort in this World, and which will be the Matter of everlasting Glory and Rejoicing to us in the next. This great Sublimity of Character, is not indeed easily or immediately attained to by any; not even by those, in whom good Principles, in the main, prevail; much less by the Men, who have been for a long Time corrupted, and almost totally alienated from a divine Life. But whoever either complieth with the Design of true Religion, or consulteth the supreme Dignity and Felicity of his Being, will certainly arrive at it, and be in constant Progression towards it; gaining daily a more entire Victory over all evil Desires and Passions, and improving in himself, a more pure and elevated Temper of Mind, a more refined, divine, and heavenly Sense of Things. And proportionably to the Progress, which he this Way maketh, he will find his inward Peace, Confidence, and Joy to be complete and full. And to this Eminence in Religion, and to this Dignity of Character, we shall

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the rather aspire, lest by falling short of them, we become like *Salt, which hath lost its Savour*: And *wherewith shall it then be salted?* It is *thenceforth good for nothing*, as our Saviour telleth, *but to be cast out, and trodden under Foot by Men.*

If the Persons, who by their Profession, and good Example, should instruct and reform, purify and edify the World, be themselves ignorant and corrupted, of profligate Principles, and a Conversation quite unfavoury and noisome; they must, surely, be thought to be the most insignificant and incurable, the most worthless and contemptible of all Mankind. And as all Men are formed for Religion, and have sufficient Powers and Advantages, from the Constitution of their Nature, if well improved by them, for leading them to the Practice of it, and enabling them, to make a decent and amiable Appearance, in Proportion to their Capacities in the Creation; when any of them, who are not in a more happy Situation, do not improve their natural Powers and Advantages for these Ends, but abuse them to directly contrary Purposes, to the plunging

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ing themselves deep into Vice, and the Debasement and Degradation of their Characters; even these must be the Objects of great Disapprobation and Dislike to us. When the Persons, who, besides the Advantages of Nature, have likewise the Benefit of the Christian Institution, to engage them to all Virtue, and the setting of a fair Pattern of Piety and Goodness to all around them, do, notwithstanding, become remarkable for all Sorts of Wickedness, and laying an ensnaring and most pernicious Example before their Neighbours; they, certainly, must be utterly unworthy, inexcusable, and detestable. When those among professed Christians, who, by their distinguished Rank, Situation, and Influence in the World, have it most in their Power, to promote and establish the Cause of true Religion, and to infuse the Principles of Virtue and Honour, into the Minds of all who approach to them, are the Means of discrediting Religion, and obstructing its Progress; nay, when they set themselves directly, as in too many Instances they do, to seduce the Innocent, to corrupt the Principles



principles and Morals of all they converse with, and to precipitate them into Debauchery and Infamy; they, most undoubtedly must be deemed to be the most degenerated and corrupted of Mortals, to be the greatest Nuisances and Pests of Society, and extremely vile and odious. When the Persons invested with civil Power, and appointed to be the Dispensers of public Justice, who by their Office, are to be the Guardians of good Manners, Conservators of Peace, Order, and Regularity, in their several Communities, shew however that they pay no due Attention to these Things; but that they can break in upon the Order and Regularity of Society, and go into any fashionable Debauchery, or other Immorality, as readily as other Men; how indecent and shameless, how low and despicable must their Behaviour appear to be! And where the Ministers and Teachers of Religion, whose whole, or great Business, is to enlighten and purify the World, by their sound and wholesome Doctrine, by Laboriousness in the Discharge of their Functions, and by the Strictness and Sublimity of an universally

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god and righteous Conversation, appear to have no due Sense of the Excellence and Importance of the great Ends of their Profession, and to be altogether indifferent and careless in the Prosecution of them, to be idle, or remiss in the Performance of their Duty, and grossly defective, and dissolute in their Conduct, they, most apparently are in a peculiar Degree, unfavoury, abominable, and offensive; and to be treated with the Marks of the severest Indignation, Contempt, and Scorn. In a Word, whoever having any Talents committed to them, by the great Governor and Lord of all, for promoting the Honour of Religion, and the Happiness of their Fellow-creatures, such as an Authority, Power, superior Wisdom and Knowledge, a large Fortune, and an extensive Influence, either altogether neglect the Improvement of them, or use them to carry on Purposes, the Reverse of those, for which they were given, shall at last be declared to be *the wicked, slothful, and unprofitable Servants, who are to be cast into the outer Darkeness, where will be Weeping, and Gnashing of Teeth.*

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Upon the whole, therefore, it concerneth us, to reflect seriously upon ourselves, upon the State in which we are, and the Tendency and Consequences of our Behaviour; and to be Christians, not merely in Name and outward Profession, but in Truth and Reality; to be quite alive, zealous, and active in the Cause of God, and of true Religion; to shew that there is a living Spring of Goodness within us, which diffuseth a kindly and happy Influence upon our whole Conduct, rendering it both ornamental to ourselves, and beneficial to all who observe it. Thus shall we pass through this Life, with Honour and Peace; and having in it been *faithful in that which is least*, shall have what is *more and greater*, committed to us in the next; where, according to the Intimations of our Saviour, in his Parables of the *Talents* and *Pounds*, we shall be raised to a State of Dignity, and honourable Trust, and reign in Glory and Felicity for evermore.

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The Character of Christians as
the Light of the World.

MATTHEW V. 14, 15, 16.

*Ye are the Light of the World: a
City that is set upon an Hill, cannot
be hid.*

*Neither do Men light a Candle, and put
it under a Buskel, but on a Candle-
stick, and it giveth Light to all that
are in the House.*

*Let your Light so shine before Men, that
they may see your good Words, and
glorify your Father, which is in Hea-
ven.*

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OUR Saviour himself having been eminently *the Light of the World*, who, from the Beginning, under every Dispensation, more or less, revealed the Will of God to Mankind, and who, particularly by the Promulgation of the Gospel, dispelled those Clouds of Ignorance and Error, which had most miserably overspread the Face of the Earth, and illuminated the Minds of Men, with the Knowledge of all the great and salutary Principles of Religion; here letteth his Disciples know, that he expected, that they should, in their Sphere, and in Proportion to their Capacities, be *the Lights of the World* likewise: As he hath furnished them with sufficient Abilities for instructing and edifying the World, and placed them in a proper Situation for these Purposes, he expecteth and requireth, that they should not conceal, or bury their Talents, but that they should bring them forth into Use and Practice; that they should, by the Purity and Wholesomeness of their Doctrine, and by the Splendour and Attraction of their Example, convince all they

they converse with, of the Truth of Religion, give them a just Impression of its Excellence, and lead them to the Practice of it. This is the Application, which our Lord expressly maketh of his Doctrine, concerning his Followers being the Light of the World, at the sixteenth Verse, *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father, which is in Heaven.* And as this is the great Point, in which we are concerned, I shall employ the remaining Part of this Discourse, in explaining and inculcating this our Saviour's Precept, or Exhortation.

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Now the Meaning of our Lord, in this Exhortation, is in general very clear and evident; that we should, by all our best Endeavours, recommend Religion to the Approbation and Love of Mankind. But that we may more distinctly understand, and more easily comply with our Duty in this Matter, I shall observe more particularly, that this Exhortation must be supposed to comprehend these two Things: 1. That we make it sufficiently plain to the

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1. This Precept requireth of us, that we make it sufficiently plain to the World, that we ourselves are truly religious and virtuous. This is most obviously contained in it, and without giving full Proof of our Piety and Goodness, it is impossible for us to observe it. We must therefore endeavour, by the constant uniform Tenour of a holy Life, to convince all impartial Men, that our Hearts are possessed of the sincere Principles of Piety and Virtue. By a careful Attendance upon all those Duties, which are of a public Nature, and proper to be performed in the Face of the World, we must shew all we converse with, that we bear an undissembled Love to Religion, and account it a Matter of the greatest Importance. We must take all proper Opportunities of frequenting the religious Assemblies of Christians, and of joining in the several Institutions of the Gospel, with all the Marks of Seriousness

ousness and true Devotion ; that by this Means, we may evidence the divine Temper of our Minds, and our ardent Desires to improve in Goodness and Virtue : And because no Performance of the external Duties of Religion, nor any outward Profession that we can make of it, how fair and splendid soever it may be, is sufficient of itself, to denominate us truly religious, since this is often found, where Things of greater Importance are wanting, we must give a more full and substantial Proof of our Religion, by abounding in all those Virtues, in which, the Life, or Essence of all true Religion consisteth ; such as Reverence, Gratitude, and Love to God, Justice, Compassion, and Beneficence to Men, and Purity and Moderation in the Use of outward Pleasures and Enjoyments. Both the natural Sense of our own Minds, and the Declarations of the holy Scriptures, assure us, that these are Things of the utmost Necessity and Moment in Religion, upon which the great Stress of Christianity is laid, which are most acceptable to God, and most amiable in the Eyes of Men. We must, therefore,

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therefore, make it to appear, that we are animated by the true Spirit of Religion and Godliness, by abounding in all those Instances of substantial Piety and Holiness. By a careful and an assiduous Performance of those Duties, we must shew ourselves *to be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without Rebuke, in the Midst of a crooked and perverse Generation; among whom, we are to shine as Lights in the World.* And still more particularly, we must give the World, an Evidence of our Piety and Goodness, by habituating ourselves to the Practice of such of those Virtues, as are most excellent in their Nature, and most apt to gain the Esteem and Affection of Mankind. There is indeed a native Beauty and Excellence in every one of the moral and Christian Virtues; but yet the Scriptures represent some of them, as more particularly *lovely, and of good Report.* Thus St. Peter telleth us, that *Meekness and Quietness of Spirit, are Ornaments of great Price.* And St. Paul representeth *Modesty and Sobriety,* as very adorning Excellencies; and he teacheth us, that *Justice and Fidelity,* in discharging

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ing the Duties and Offices, which Men owe to one another, in their several Stations, are very becoming and graceful Parts of Religion, in those who practise them. And above all, Charity is an amiable Virtue, and apt to command the Respect and Love of the World. Men are indeed necessarily determined, from the Frame of their Beings, to admire and reverence, in a peculiar Manner, this Quality, and to esteem the Persons, who are possessed of it. A generous extensive Benevolence to all Mankind, is the noblest Enlargement of the human Heart, the highest Advancement of our Nature, and the chief Ornament of a great Mind. By this, we discover the strongest virtuous Disposition, and are *perfect, even as our Father, who is in Heaven, is perfect.* By the Practice, therefore, of these Virtues more especially, we should make known our good Affections and Dispositions, and give Men, the most satisfying and agreeable Proof of the Truth and Reality of our Religion.

Nor will our acting thus, be inconsistent with the Directions, which our Saviour

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Saviour giveth in the Beginning of the following Chapter, in Relation to the secret Exercise of *Almsgiving and Devotion*; provided we perform not our Duty, upon any Principles of Ostentation and Vain-glory. The practising the Duties of Almsgiving and Prayer, upon these Principles, and the publishing the Performance of them, with great Affectation and Pomp, when some Circumstances attending them, required that they should have been concealed, was what our Lord intended to reprehend in the hypocritical Pharisees, and strictly to caution his own Followers against: Not that we should not practise even these Duties, as well as perform all the other Works of Piety and Righteousness, upon their genuine Motives, at all proper Times, in the most free and unreserved Manner that can be.

2. This Precept requireth us to do whatever is in our Power, to implant the true Principles of Religion in the Minds of others, and to engage them to the Practice of it. This is, certainly, a very proper Way of diffusing our Light through the World, to seek the Advan-

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vancement of Christian Knowledge, to impress upon the Minds of Men, a Sense of Virtue, and its Obligations. We must, therefore, endeavour by all proper Means to carry on this Design. A good Example, is of great Importance in Order to it. This our Saviour taketh Notice of in the Text; *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father, who is in Heaven.* It is certain, that Example hath a wonderful Power, and that nothing doth more easily and generally influence the Manners of Men, than it doth. We are apt to do what we see others do, though it be very bad: Every Day's Experience furnisheth us with many and sad Instances of the Influence of evil Examples. But there are, surely, peculiar Charms in those that are good and excellent. The Force of such Examples added to the many Considerations, which recommend Virtue to the Choice of Mankind, could hardly be resisted. A lively Pattern of Goodness, is a great Incitement to a generous Mind, and strongly allureth to Imitation; and indeed formeth the Mind, sometimes almost

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almost insensibly into a virtuous Disposition. Were but the Examples of Virtue and Goodness more numerous, we might expect better Effects from them, in the Reformation of Mankind, than we can hope for, from almost any other Thing whatsoever. Vice would soon be put out of Countenance by them, and many at least, of those, who have hitherto practised it, would from a noble Emulation of Mind, be excited, *to go and do likewise.*

But besides our promoting Religion and Virtue, by our good Example, we must likewise contribute to the same Purpose, by our Admonitions and Re-proofs, and our Instructions and Exhortations. These, as they are more plain and direct, may sometimes be effectual for awakening those, whom no Examples can move. Indeed, the proper Way of dealing with the more obstinate Sort of Sinners, is to expostulate freely with them, concerning the Evil of their Practices, to convince them, if possible, of the infinite Danger of an evil Course, and to advise them seriously to amend, and become inconceivably happy in the
Mercy

Mercy and Favour of God. There are, certainly, but few, who are duly qualified for taking upon them the Office of exhorting and reproofing Mankind. This requireth so much Wisdom and Prudence, such great Impartiality and Exactness of Judgment, and such Candour and Humanity of Temper, that it is, perhaps, one of the most difficult Provinces, that any can undertake; and Persons who have but ordinary Abilities, may be justly deterred from venturing upon it. But when it is managed with Discretion and Judgment, and is under the Direction of a Spirit of Meekness and Charity, it may certainly be very useful to our Brethren. *Reprove one, that hath Understanding, saith Solomon, and he will understand Knowledge.* And therefore the Jews had an express Precept given to them, *to rebuke their Neighbour in any wise, and not to suffer Sin to be upon him.* And Christians are likewise required, *to warn the unruly, to teach and admonish one another, and to exhort one another daily, lest any should be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

3. Lastly,

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3. Lastly, we must employ all the Advantages that we are possessed of, either from our natural Capacities, or from our Situation and Circumstances in the World, for promoting the Interest of Religion. Whatever our Talents and Abilities are of Understanding, Judgment, Learning, Power, Credit, and Interest with Men, Riches, and the like, they should all be subservient to this End. By these we may be capable of undertaking, and going through with some very useful Designs and Works; such as educating the Children of the poorer Sort, in the Principles of Honesty and Virtue, and training them to Labour and Industry; dispersing Books of Instruction, among these who are willing to make Use of them, and cannot procure them for themselves; and many other Things of the same Tendency: Which may contribute very much to the Increase of Knowledge, Piety, and Virtue, and will *make our Light to shine, to good Advantage, before Men.*

For a farther Explanation of this Precept, I shall now consider who the Persons

sons are, to whom it is directed, and who are more especially concerned to observe and obey it.

It is not to be doubted, but that Christians in general, are obliged to observe this Precept. Our Saviour directed it, not only to his Apostles, or the more eminent of his Disciples, but to the whole Body of them; to as many as were desirous to hear his Doctrine, and to be instructed in it. Every Christian, indeed, is designed to be a Light to the World, and is as a City set upon a Hill; He is to be a bright Pattern of all Virtue, and by his Example, Instructions, and Exhortations, to enlighten, purify, and reform Mankind. This, certainly, is what may be expected from every good Man. And therefore *Solomon* compareth the Path of such, *to the shining Light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.* But though it be the Duty, undoubtedly, of all Christians to obey this Precept, yet some should be more particularly careful to do so; I mean those, whose advantageous Situation in the World, giveth them an Opportunity of diffusing their Light farther than

VOL. III. X others,

SERM. others, whose Rank and Condition will
XI. give Weight to their Instructions, and
make their Endeavours to promote the
Cause of Virtue, much more effectual,
than the Endeavours of meaner Persons
for that Purpose, can be.

1. Among these, Persons of high Rank and Quality, of large Fortune, and of great Authority and Power, should take the Lead, and exert themselves with the most generous and noble Zeal, in the Service of God, and the Cause of Religion. These, having it most in their Power, to establish and propagate the Principles of Piety and Virtue in the World, are plainly under the strongest Obligations to contribute to these Purposes. The Experience of Men, ever since political Bodies have been formed, putteth it beyond all Doubt, that the Prince and chief Men of any Country, can make the Generality of those, who are about them, either virtuous, or vicious: And for this, there is evidently a Foundation in Nature. The lower Orders of Men, are extremely apt to take their Superiors for their Patterns, and are even proud of being thought like
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to those, whom they take to be the only excellent and happy Persons. Besides, the Rank and Figure of the Great, procure to them the highest Attention and Deference, and give a peculiar Force to their Instructions and Admonitions, and any other Endeavours, which they may use for the Reformation of the World, and often render a short Hint, or the fewest Words from them, productive of much Good, when many long Discourses, and earnest Persuasives from others, will be intirely disregarded. Of these, therefore, it may be more especially expected, that they should lay out themselves to promote the Interests of Religion and Virtue, since their Attempts this Way, are most likely to prove successful.

And to this, they should likewise be excited, from a laudable Ambition, very becoming Persons of Distinction and Rank, and of great Abilities: As in all other Things, they justly have the Pre-eminence, let them not act below the Dignity of their Characters, in the most noble and important Concern, of gaining Multitudes of rational and moral

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Beings, partaking of the same Nature with themselves, though greatly below them in their outward Condition, by their wise Counsels, and bright Examples, to the Ways of Virtue, and thereby rendering them of the greatest Use to the World, and most truly happy in themselves. In promoting these godlike Purposes, if they would be thought to be, what their Rank and Situation require they should be, Persons of Magnanimity and Honour, they must always place their chief Glory and Happiness. But if notwithstanding the strong Obligations, which the Men of the greatest Note and Eminence in the World are under, to patronize the Cause of Virtue, they are utterly negligent in this Matter, or act a quite contrary Part; if instead of improving the Advantages, which the Eminence of their Condition giveth them, for becoming both remarkably good in themselves, and infusing a Sense of Goodness and Honour into the Minds of those they converse with, they abuse these Advantages for running into all Sorts of Profligacy and Licentiousness, and corrupting the Principles and Manners

ners of all who come near to them, they must, certainly, be the most inexcusable and guilty of all Men. After this, when they come to feel the dismal Effects of a Dissolution, or of a general Relaxation of Morals, they may complain piteously of the Badness of the Times, and vainly endeavour to throw the Load off themselves, and to charge the Blame of all the Evils and Disasters which they suffer, upon the Neglects and Miscarriages of that Order of Men, who are appointed to be the Instructors and Guides of the Public, in Matters of Religion; when, God knoweth, the wisest and best of these, often find, that it is but little in their Power, to stem the Torrent, and to oppose the Progress of Corruption; and that it is still less in their Power, to extirpate those Vices and Immoralities, which have been introduced, and rivetted, chiefly by the Authority and Influence, the Countenance and Example of the Great.

2. I hope none will imagine, that I mean, by what hath been just now said, to intimate, that the Pastors of the Church, the Ministers and Teachers of

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Religion, are not to use the most strenuous Endeavours, to promote the Interest of Piety and Virtue. After Persons of superior Rank and Power, they of all Men, are most strictly obliged to do so. Besides their being endowed with Abilities for this Service, an Advantage which they have, in some Degree, in common with their Superiors, their particular Calling, or Designation, layeth a peculiar Tye upon them, to attend to it. By their Profession, they are to employ themselves continually, in the excellent Work, of instructing and edifying the World, by wholesome Doctrine, and an universally pure and exemplary Conversation. And whenever any of them, are quite negligent about attaining to this great End of their Vocation; and still more, when they contradict and defeat it, by a profane, sensual, lewd, and worldly Conduct, they must fall under the severest Censures and Reproaches, and are indeed to be considered, as Persons extremely base and vile, odious and contemptible.

3. The last Order of Men, whom I shall take Notice of, as being more particularly

ticularly obliged to obey the Precept in the Text, are Parents and Masters of Families. Though these move in a narrower Sphere, than the Persons whom I have already mentioned, yet, they may do great Service to Religion, by engaging their Children and Dependants to it. Families are the first Seminaries of Virtue, and a vast deal depends on the Care which is taken to sow, and propagate the Seeds and Principles of it in them. If no Care is taken to propagate and promote Religion in private Families, the unavoidable Consequences must be, that Vices of various Kinds, will sprout up in the uninstructed and uncultivated Minds of Children and Servants, which will soon increase into such strong Habits, as will, perhaps, never afterwards be broken, by any Instructions and Admonitions, or by any other Means whatsoever: Whereas, if due Pains be taken by Parents, and Masters of Families, to implant the Principles of Piety and Virtue, in the Minds of Persons in their tender Years, it may be hoped, that they will be attended with very good and lasting Effects. *Train up a Child, saith So-*

SERM. *Isaiah, in the Way, in which he should go,*
 XI. *and when he is old, he will not depart from*

it.

Children from the Love, which they naturally bear to their Parents, pay the greatest Respect to their Precepts and Instructions, and most easily fall into an Imitation of what they do. And Servants, from their Attendance on their Masters, are apt to take deep Impressions from their Example, and to practise according to it, when they set out for themselves in the World. It should, therefore, be the Care of Fathers, and Governors of Families, to give wise Instructions and Advices, to their Children, and to all who are about them, and to set a Pattern of the purest Virtue before them. This is the Duty of their Place and Station, and a Thing very pleasing and acceptable to God, as is plain from the Commendation, which he gave to *Abraham*, upon the Account of it. *I know Abraham*, said he, *that he will command his Children, and his Household after him, to keep the Way of the Lord, and to do Justice and Judgment.*

But notwithstanding, that the early seasoning and disciplining of young Minds,

Minds, with the Principles of Piety and Virtue, is of so much Importance, it is certain, that there is hardly any Thing, about which, the Generality of those, who are principally concerned in the Affair, are more remiss and careless. It is plain, that the greatest Part of Parents, and Governors of Families, are so far from having a due Concern about the Religion and Morals of their Children, and other Domesticks, that they scarcely ever seriously think of such Things; and are so far from preventing the Growth of Vice in them, that by their Examples at least, they fatally corrupt and debauch their Minds. Several, it is certain, go a great deal further, by approving, and taking Pleasure in the vicious Dispositions of their Children; by applauding them for bold Swearing and Cursing, for artful Lies, and lewd and obscene Discourse; looking on such Things, as Arguments of Sprightliness, promising Parts, and I know not what other Excellencies in them. From whence, but the total Want of good Education, and the constant Influence of an ill Example, can it proceed, that
so

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so many young Creatures, by the Time, perhaps, that they can speak just distinctly, (a Thing which may be often observed, though not without Horror by a serious Mind) have learned upon every trifling Occasion, to use the Name of God, in the most irreverent and profane Manner ; and to express themselves in the most bitter Execrations and Revilings of one another ? From whence, but from a familiar bad Example, and the utter Neglect of Admonition, Correction, and Reproof, can it flow, that so many of these, who have not attained to Wisdom, and Experience, in any Sort sufficient to conduct properly the Business of the World, have yet made great Advances, in the little Arts of Deceit, Fraud, and low Cunning ? And to what can the Proneness of so many young Persons, (who are hardly entered into the World, or fit to mix in the Company of Men) to Intemperance, Riot, and gross Debauchery, be ascribed, but the wretched Conduct of those, who are designed to be their Patterns, Instructors, and Guides to all Purity and Goodness ? Human Nature of itself,
doth



doth not lead us to any Immoralities ; on the contrary, we have a natural Abhorrence of Vice, in all the grosser Instances of it. But when Children and Youth, who are not capable of much Reflection, have nothing before their Eyes, but the continual bad Conduct of those, upon whom they chiefly depend, and to whose Care they are committed, they are very easily and insensibly thrown out of the Course of Nature, and precipitated into Measures, which, without their retreating in Time from them, may end in their utter Ruin ; but, surely, not without a great Degree of Guilt in those, who having been naturally trusted and charged with the Care of forming and moulding their Minds aright, have been most grossly defective in that important Branch of their Duty.

Indeed the greatest Care and Pains of Parents, for the good Education of their Children, are sometimes disappointed ; but in this Case, whatever they may suffer from the Misbehaviour of their Children, they will at least, have the Satisfaction of reflecting, that they are not chargeable with the Guilt of their
Mis-

SERM. Misconduct, and that *they have delivered*
 XI. *their own Souls.*

For persuading and engaging you to comply with this Direction of our Saviour, I shall propose to you the following Considerations.

I. That the Honour and Interest of Christianity require that we should do so. The Christian Religion is given out by its Professors and Advocates for a most holy Institution, and the Means of advancing human Nature to the highest Perfection in Virtue of which it is capable. Much is always said, in Commendation of the Gospel, on the Score of its moral Doctrines, and practical Precepts, when we mean to gain Profelytes to it, and effectually to recommend it to the Esteem and Affection of Mankind. And indeed no Praise given to the Institution of our Saviour, upon these Accounts, can be thought to be too much; as it is a Doctrine intirely according to Godliness, and admirably contrived and calculated, in every Part of it, to make all who profess it, perfectly upright and pure in Heart, and eminently *holy in all Manner of Conversation.* But notwithstanding



notwithstanding this, the Persons who have no Opportunity of being thoroughly acquainted with the Nature and Genius of our Religion, will be apt to suspect the Truth and Goodness of it, when they see nothing in the Conduct of those, who profess it, answerable to what they give out concerning it. It was an Objection long ago made to our blessed Saviour, that if he had taught a holy Doctrine, his Followers would have led holy Lives. As we would not, therefore, bring our most holy Religion, into Disesteem and Contempt, as we would not have that sacred Name, by which we are called, vilified and blasphemed, we should make the Force of our Belief, to appear in the Innocence, and universal Integrity of our Lives, and be in all Things careful to act up to the Purity and Strictness of our Profession. Thus shall we remove those unjust Censures, which Christianity hath often undergone for the Miscarriages of its Professors, and represent it with Advantage to the World, and indeed prepare the Way, for its being in Time, received and embraced by all Mankind.

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2. Another Motive to our complying with our Saviour's Exhortation, is, that it will tend to the Glory of God. This is our Lord's Argument in the Text; *Let your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* And the same Consideration St. Peter useth, to persuade the Christians, to whom he wrote, *to have their Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that by the good Works, which they shall behold in them, they may glorify God in the Day of Visitation.* By an eminently virtuous and exemplary Behaviour, it may be expected, that we shall convince those we converse with, of the Goodness of Religion, and bring them to a Love and Profession of it. The Consequence of which will be, that God will be glorified by their Repentance and Salvation. For God is always honoured, when Men forsake their Sins, and subject themselves to his righteous Government, and become capable of that Happiness, which his Goodness hath prepared for them. This is as true a Notion as any that we can have of the Glory of God; as the Glory of a Prince,

con-

consisteth in the Obedience and Happiness of his Subjects. And now what higher and nobler End can we propose to ourselves, than to bring this Glory to God. This, as *St. Paul* telleth us, is what we are to have a Regard to, in all our Actions: *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* This all the Ties of Duty, and of Gratitude, for the infinite Benefits, which God hath conferred upon us, oblige us to promote. And we should be the more active in promoting it, when Vice is so daring and insolent, and some profane Wretches do what they can to affront God, and to stamp some Credit upon the vilest Impieties. In this Case, it certainly concerneth us, to exert our utmost Zeal in the Cause of God, and for the Honour of his Name, for putting a Stop to the Impudence of Vice, and the Establishment of God's Kingdom of Virtue and Righteousness among Men.

3. A third Consideration for our complying, heartily and fully, with our Saviour's Exhortation, may be brought from the Good of Mankind. That the
good

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good Works, and pious Endeavours of serious Christians, to communicate the Knowledge of divine Truths, and to propagate the Principles of Religion, have a happy Tendency to make others virtuous and good, is sufficiently evident from what hath been already said, and is indeed so obvious, upon the least Reflection, that every one will easily comprehend it. And it is no less evident, that this is the highest Instance of Kindness and Charity, which we can exercise towards Men; as it procureth to them the most valuable Good, and delivereth them from the greatest of all Miseries. Whoever, therefore, is well affected towards Mankind, and truly consulteth their Interest, which no Mind, that hath any Tincture of Ingenuity and Generosity in it, can ever fail to be, and to do, must necessarily be very careful to observe our Saviour's Precept, endeavouring by a holy, exemplary Life, and by all the Methods of mild Instruction, soft Persuasion, and gentle Admonition and Reproof, to bring Sinners to Repentance, and a better Mind, and the Way of obtaining Salvation. *Brethren, faith*
St.

as the Light of the World.

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St. James, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he, who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bide a Multitude of Sins.

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4. To these Considerations, for animating our Zeal in this Cause, I shall only add, in the last Place, that to have our Light shining before Men, in the full Extent of this Phrase, will contribute greatly to the Increase of our own Happiness, in the other World. Our Saviour speaketh of the Reward of a Prophet, or of one, who maketh it his Business to promote Religion, by his Doctrine and Example, as something uncommon and extraordinary. And the Prophet Daniel declareth, that *they who be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever, and ever.* God is not unrighteous to forget the Work and Labour of Love, which those shew to his Name, who oppose themselves to a Torrent of Vice, Profaneness, and Impiety, and do whatever is in their Power, to support the Inte-

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rest and Honour of Religion. Such Persons shall meet with the more joyful Congratulations, on their Arrival in the other World, and be received with the highest Triumph in Heaven, shall be greatly honoured by God, and obtain a Recompence from him, proportionable to their Integrity, and the Pains and Diligence, which they have used in his Service.

I shall conclude with two or three short Reflections upon the whole.

I. We may see the solid Worth, and great Excellence of our Religion, which is not satisfied with a small Measure of Virtue in its Professors, but exacteth the highest Degrees of it from them, which they can possibly attain to. To be but indifferently, or obscurely good, to be contented just to keep within the Borders of Piety and Holiness, is but a poor Character for a Disciple of Jesus Christ. The Gospel leadeth us to much higher Attainments: It designeth to make us conspicuously good and holy, and marketh us out for public Standards of Virtue to Mankind. And doth it not tend exceedingly to the Honour of Christianity,

tianity, that it raiseth up Men to such a sublime Pitch of Goodness, that it inspireth them with such generous Principles, and maketh their Lives so exemplary and useful to the World?

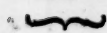
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2. From hence, however, we are naturally led to a very mortifying and painful Reflection on the Disproportion, or Unsuitableness of our Conduct, to the Demands of our Religion. How little are we concerned to act like Persons, who are to be *the Light of the World*, who are to diffuse an enlivening and salutary Influence, and to set a bright Pattern to all around us; who are to adorn Religion, and to recommend it, by our Conduct, to the Approbation and Love of Mankind. Instead of thus *walking worthy of the Vocation, wherewith we are called*, and *having our Conversation such as becometh the Gospel*; are not many of us disgracing our Profession, by a profane and impious, a sensual and worldly, a lewd and debauched, an unjust and dishonest Behaviour; and giving Occasion, every Day, to reproach that holy Name by which we are called? Are not others of us, who are not

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so notoriously vicious and abandoned, at best very cold and indifferent in Matters of Religion, but little solicitous about either the Honour of God, or the Improvement of ourselves, or others, in those Principles and Practices, which are the Foundation of the Perfection and Happiness of the human Nature ; shewing very plainly, that we are but trifling in an Affair of infinite Importance, and that though we may *have a Name to live*, yet, in Reality, *we are dead*? How few of us, in Comparison of that great Multitude of formal, insincere, hypocritical Professors of Christianity, are possessed of that inward Temper, that vital Spirit of Religion, which maketh those, in whom it prevaieth, not only innocent, but entirely, uniformly, and constantly pure and virtuous, in the general Course of their Conversation, which, (to use the Words of an excellent Man) animateth them with a divine Zeal, to be still better and better ; more eminently good and exemplary ; putting them on the Use of Prayers, and all outward Devotions, as solemn Acts, testifying what they inwardly feel, and are at Heart, and

and as Methods instituted by God, for advancing them farther, into a more refined, spiritual, and active Sense of divine Things? It is too evident, that this Spirit of genuine and true Religion, hath, in a great Measure, failed among the present Generation of nominal Christians, who will never avail themselves of their empty Professions, and vain Pretences; but who have rather Reason to apprehend, that their contradicting in Practice, the whole Design of that Religion, which they profess to believe; or that their Lukewarmness and Indifference in a Matter of such vast Seriousness and Moment, will involve them in a fearful Guilt, and expose them to a most terrible Condemnation.

3. Lastly we may see, what a Matter of great Moment, our practising the Duty here recommended to us by our Saviour is; as hereby we shall at once fulfil all the most important Obligations, which are laid upon us; or, as in doing so, we shall most effectually consult the Interest of our Religion, and perform the greatest Service, which we are capa-

SERM. ble of, to God, to the World, and to
XI. ourselves.



Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead, our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ: To whom be Glory, for ever, and ever. Amen.

TWO SERMONS

UPON

HEBREWS XIII. 4.

TWO SERMONS

UPON

THE EPISTLE OF

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THE P R E F A C E.

THE two following Sermons, were some time since, drawn up, with an honest Intention, of doing Service to the People, who statedly attend on the Author's public Ministrations ; to whom they were accordingly addressed from the Pulpit.

But as the Enormities reprehended in them, are not the peculiar Growth of any one Place, but prevail very grossly almost every where, to the great Reproach of the Christian Name, and the infinite Prejudice of the World, they are now sent abroad, with a View of more extensive Usefulness ; at least, of the putting some little Stop to the Progress of Vices, very common and fashionable, though at the same Time, of the most malignant Nature, and most destructive Tendency.

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The Author is not sanguine enough, to expect, that any Thing which he hath here said, or could farther urge against the Vices, which he reproveth, will have much good Effect, or any at all, upon inveterate Offenders, and the high spirited Libertines of the Age, who have got a Set of Maxims and Principles, which, together with the Influence of their evil Habits, will, most probably render them impregnable to all Reasoning, which can be used, to divert them from their favourite Gratifications; and which, upon any serious Attempt to reclaim them, will make them ready to cry out, *What would this Babler say?*

Acts xvii.
18.

But notwithstanding all the Disdain and Ridicule, with which he may be treated from this Quarter, the Author, conscious of the Goodness of his Intention, confident in the Justice of his Cause, and fully satisfied as to the Propriety and Seasonableness of any Attempt, that promises at all well, to support it, ventures these plain Discourses into the World, not without some Hope, if they be read with Attention, and Impartiality, of their making a good Impression,

pression, even upon some of the Debauched and Licentious, who are not quite incorrigible, who have still some Principles of Ingenuity and Honour, and some Sense of Duty, or of moral Obligations, remaining in their Minds; and of contributing to the Establishment of some others, who are yet free from the common Contagion, in a State of Purity and Sobriety.

The first Sermon, though not directly levelled at the Vices, the checking of which is the chief Design of the Author, was at first written, and is now published, on Account of its being a proper Introduction to the second, and its having a plain Connection with it; and as some Things in it, throw a Light upon, and add a Force, in several Places, to the Reasoning which is used in the latter; besides its containing some important Reflections on the Marriage-State in general, which may be of Use to several Persons, who may be willing to attend, and to make a good Improvement of them.

The Subjects here treated of, are not usually handled at any great Length in the

the Pulpit ; one Reason of which, hath been an Apprehension of the Difficulty of discoursing largely upon them, without offending the Modesty, or Delicacy of the Hearers.

From the great Caution, however, which hath been used in this Matter, one Evil hath, probably, arisen, that many Persons are disposed to think more favourably of the gross Immoralities, which they are here warned against, than they would have thought of them, if the great Malignity and Danger of them, had been, upon clear and solid Grounds, more frequently and fully exposed, and presented to their Minds.

As for the Reason suggested, against discoursing on these Immoralities, largely and particularly in public ; it is certain, that all Indecency, or Indelicacy both of Sentiment and Expression, is to be carefully guarded against, especially in the Pulpit : But there is an affected, or fantastic Delicacy, often to be found as to certain Points, which is not much to be regarded. And from all Trespases upon the Rules of real Delicacy and Decorum, a small Degree of Discretion, must

must certainly be sufficient to restrain a Man, in treating upon any Subjects of Morality.

The Author offereth no Apology for himself upon this Score, not being sensible that he standeth in Need of any.

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that certainly be sufficient to restrain
 him, in treating upon any subject of
 history. The subject of a history for
 the study of the student, not being for
 the study of the student in itself of any

value, it is not to be considered as a
 subject of study, but as a subject of
 study. The subject of a history for
 the study of the student, not being for
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S E R M O N XII.

The Dignity and Honour of the
Matrimonial State: With the
Nature and Ends, and the Laws
or the Conditions of Marriage.

H E B R E W S XIII. 4.

*Marriage is honourable in all, and the
Bed undefiled; but Whoremongers and
Adulterers, God will judge.*

I N these Words, the Apostle layeth down SERM.
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two distinct Propositions, or Affertions: The first, relating to the Dignity and Honour which belong to the Matrimonial State; *Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled.* The other, concerning the Evil and Danger of Whoredom and Adultery; *but Whoremongers*

SERM. *mongers and Adulterers, God will judge.*
 XII. I shall treat of these distinctly, in their
 ~~~~~ Order.

The first Assertion of the Apostle, is, concerning the Dignity and Honour of the Matrimonial State: *Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled.* Now, in order to our perceiving more clearly and easily the Dignity of this State, it will be of Use to premise some Things, concerning the Nature and Ends of Marriage, and the necessary Laws, or Conditions of it. From hence the Importance and Honour of the matrimonial Relation, will evidently appear: And, after illustrating this, I shall, for compleating the Subject, briefly consider the Qualifications, which should principally recommend Men and Women to one another, when they chuse their Associates in the Marriage State.

As for the Nature of Marriage: It is the Union, or League, of one Man and one Woman, entered into by some solemn Form, or Act, for the Propagation of the Species, for the Nurture and Education of their common Offspring,  
 and

and for their mutual Comfort and Happiness. It is an Institution which took Place from the Beginning, among Men, as we learn from the sacred History; and which hath been held in Repute, not only by those who might have been at first, instructed immediately by Heaven, as to the Nature, Ends, and Uses of it; but, by the People of all Nations, who have spoken in the most honourable Terms of the Marriage State, and have considered the Obligations of it, to be sacred and inviolable. The Reasons and Ends of this Institution, are very plain and obvious.

In the first Place, it is evident, that the Bodies of all terrestrial Animals, are so formed, that they must soon decay and perish; and therefore, if no Provision had been made for the Continuance of them, in successive Generations, the Earth must have quickly become desolate, or a Place without Inhabitants. The Way, in which a regular Succession of the living Creatures of this World, could have been kept up, must have been either by the immediate Creation of God, as often as a new Supply of them was

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wanted, or, by their being originally endowed with the Power and Inclination of propagating their several Kinds. This latter Method, which seemeth to be by far more suitable than the other, to the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of the great Creator, was fixed on for replenishing the Earth, and peopling the World. The Faculty and Instinct for Generation, were given to Mankind in common with the inferior Orders of Animals : And in Consequence of this, the Sexes, as they advance towards Maturity, feel a peculiar Tenderneſs, ſome delicate and pleaſing Emotions, and Deſires towards each other. After ſome Time, a pleaſing outward Form, the Appearances of Beauty, intimate Acquaintance, familiar Converſation, and ſeveral other concurring Circumſtances, for the moſt Part, fix the Affection, which was before vague and rambling, upon a particular Object, and reduce it in the Heart of a Man, or a Woman, into a permanent Attachment to an Individual of the other Sex ; which, in the End, uſually produceth that moral Tye, or Connection, which is called Marriage.

riage. And thus the Pair, who are so attached to one another, are brought into a Way for enjoying all the Endearments of conjugal Love, and particularly, for the Procreation of Children, in a Manner worthy of the Wisdom and Power of the Maker and Governor of the World, and, which is at the same Time, very expreffive of his Indulgence and Favour, to the Individuals of the human Race, and of his Care for the Order, Peace, and Happinefs of Society.

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But, besides this first Reason, or End of the matrimonial Institution, the Procreation of Children, there is another, which is at least of as much Importance, which is the Rearing and Educating of the Children, who are thus brought into the World. Indeed the bringing Children merely into Life, if they are afterwards to be deserted, or exposed, and suffered to perish, is so far from being a Thing of Merit, that with all, who have any of the genuine Sentiments of Humanity, it must be shocking and detestable. The young Ones of almost all the living Creatures upon Earth,

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stand in Need, for some Time, of the Watchfulness and Care of the Parent Animals, for their Preservation and Support. But, this is more remarkably the Case of the human Offspring, than of the Offspring of any other Species of Animals ; as they come into the World, in the most weak and helpless State that can be imagined, and continue for a much longer Period in that State, than any other Kind of Offspring do. And, as the Attendance and Care, which are necessary for preserving and rearing them, are not to be expected, at least in many Instances, but from those, who have some strong Connection with them, it hath pleased the all-wise and most gracious Creator, to infuse into the Hearts of all who are nearly related to them, some very tender Feelings for them ; and particularly, to implant in the Breasts of their Fathers and Mothers, the strongest parental Affection, which, when given Way to, and duly cultivated, will dispose them to engage cheerfully in any Services, which may be of Use to their Children ; and even to spend themselves, if it be necessary, in Watchings,



ings, Toils, and Labours, for their Good: Which will certainly make the Parents, to give a particular Attention to their Children, during their very indigent and infirm State in Infancy and Childhood; and to guard and protect them, with the utmost Solitude, from the Dangers and Snares, to which they are incident in the tempestuous Season of Youth; which will make them all along to take Care of their Health, and to do what they can, to give them a firm and vigorous Constitution of Body, and to infuse into their Minds, valuable Knowledge of all Kinds; as they are capable of receiving it, either from their own Instruction, or the procured Instruction of others; and to settle and confirm them in good Principles and Habits: That so, when they set out in the World, they may be of some Significancy and Importance in it, useful Members of the Communities to which they belong, and Ornaments of the Church of God. The Care and Pains which are wanted for this Education of Children, should be divided between the Parents, each of them, taking that

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Share in their Education, which is best suited to his, or her respective Abilities and Qualifications; but neither of them ever neglecting the Part, incumbent on him, or her, in this momentous Affair, from Indolence and Sloth, or for the Sake of any private personal Gratifications; which cannot, indeed, be neglected by them, without their being highly blameable, and which, the Affection, with which Nature hath endowed them towards their Offspring, if at all properly improved and exerted, will never permit them to neglect.

There is still another important End of the matrimonial Relation, the mutual Comfort and Happiness of the Persons who are joined together in it. As Men are by Nature, sociable Beings, and even take Delight in the Intimacies of Society and Friendship; as without some Indulgencies of this Sort, Life would soon grow insipid, if not insupportable to them; God hath been pleased to provide for their Ease and Satisfaction in this Respect, by constituting them naturally Members of Society at large, and laying a Foundation for their enter-  
ing

ing into the closest Union and Friendship in the married State. The sacred Historian informs us, that after the Creation of Man, God said, *it was not good for him to be alone* ; and that he, therefore, created Woman ; a Being of the same Nature and Kind with himself, only of a different Sex, *to be an Help-mate for him*. And certainly, a Man, and a Woman, joined in the nuptial Bond, may be great Helpers and Promoters of one another's Welfare and Happiness ; as the different Talents and Qualities of each, tally to the Deficiencies and Wants of the other, and are adapted for the supplying and making up reciprocally, those Deficiencies and Wants. Besides, that intimate Union of their Persons, and that Reciprocation of Affection, which is pre-supposed in all rightly formed Marriages, and that Harmony of Counsels and Measures, for promoting their own Good, and the Good of their common Offspring, must extremely endear a Husband and a Wife to one another, and chearfully engage them to all the Offices of the tenderest Love and Kindness, and to all the Acts

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of Complaisance, Courtesy, and Condescension, which either of them can expect from the other, and must, indeed, render their Union, as our great Poet expresseth it, \* *a perpetual Fountain of domestic Sweets*. If the Reverse of all this, happeneth sometimes to be the Case; if the Marriage State, instead of being a State of Harmony, Love, and Joy, turneth out a Scene of Discord, Vexation, and Misery; this is to be imputed not to any bad Tendency in the original Institution of Marriage, which is apparently calculated for the Good of Society in general, and for the Satisfaction and Comfort of every married Pair in particular; but to the wrong Views of Men and Women, when they enter into the matrimonial State, and to the Prevalence of ill Humours and Passions in them afterwards, which make them to pervert an excellent and beneficial Institution of God, and to turn it, as in other Instances, they often turn his most valuable Gifts, to their own Ruin and Destruction. But when the Marriage State is entered into upon a right

\* Paradise Lost.

Plan, and the Persons bound together in it, conduct themselves with that Discretion and Affection, which are necessary to the Performance of the Duties of this State, it cannot fail to be a Source of the purest and finest Pleasures to them, and to render them vastly more happy than they could be, either in following a dissolute Course of Life, or in living in a solitary single State. And this is a Reason, or End, for the Continuation of the conjugal Relation, when the other Ends of it have been fully obtained, or, after Children have been procreated and educated, and put into the World, in such a Way, as to be no longer under the Inspection and Care of their Parents : Or, it may be considered as an End of entering into this Relation, independently on all other Ends of it ; as Persons who have no Prospect, or Expectation of an Offspring, may, in many Cases, very wisely and commendably enter themselves into it, purely for Family Order, and domestic Society, and the Intercourses of a sincere and tender Friendship.

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For explaining and opening up this Subject, somewhat farther, the Terms and Conditions of the matrimonial Union, must, in the next Place, be specified, and considered a little by us.

And first, One of these Terms, is the mutual Fidelity of the Husband and Wife, in the Article of the Marriage-Bed. A Violation of the Faith, which they have solemnly plighted to one another, in this Matter, directly dissolveth the matrimonial Contract, as it subverteth all the Ends and Designs of it, and is indeed one of the most heinous Offences on both Sides, which can be committed. It seemeth, however, to be a more aggravated Crime, on the Side of the Woman ; who can never bring herself to consent to it, without having broken through the strongest inward Checks and Restraints, particularly, that, arising from the original Modesty of her Nature, which is always considered as the peculiar Ornament of her Sex : Besides, this Infidelity to her Husband is usually attended with Robbery, by imposing a spurious Issue upon him, who will carry away Part, at least, of that Inheritance

heritance or Estate, which of Right, belongeth only to his own Children. But Unfaithfulness of this Sort, on the Part of the Man, is likewise a most flagrant Wickedness: By being unfaithful to his Wife, he cannot indeed, impose a spurious Offspring upon her, as she may do upon him; but still he is guilty of great Injustice to her, by withdrawing his Affection from her, at least in Part, and placing it upon a Stranger, though she hath a Right to the Whole of it, as much as he hath a Right to the Whole of her conjugal Love, and upon which, she might naturally have depended, for its being a Source of constant Consolation and Joy to her. By this Conduct, he is chargeable with a Crime of a very complicated evil Nature, which maketh a most terrible Inroad upon his own Mind, laying waste all good Principles, and stifling a Sense of the most solemn and sacred Obligations in it; a Crime, which is prejudicial to human Society itself, which often raiseth great Disturbances and Confusions in Neighbourhoods, which breedeth implacable Dissentions and Animosities in Families,

SERM. Families, which confoundeth natural  
XII. Relations, and which may very possibly  
tempt the injured Party to retaliate upon  
him in Kind, the Injury which he doth  
to her, which must necessarily be pro-  
ductive of further Mischiefs and Distres-  
ses, the utter Extinction of mutual Affec-  
tion, the creating an endless Jealousy  
and Distrust of one another, and the fix-  
ing a Breach between them, which is  
never to be repaired; together with a  
total Neglect of their common Offspring,  
and a Subversion of all that Order and  
good Oeconomy, which ought to take  
Place in their Family. Of such an hei-  
nous Nature, and malignant Tendency,  
is the Crime which the Man commit-  
teth, who deserteth the Bed of his Wife,  
to indulge himself in vagrant Love, or  
in the Way of promiscuous Fornication,  
Nor would the Case be much altered for  
the better, if he should go into the Way  
of Poligamy, or Concubinage; or of  
having more Wives than one at the same  
Time, all of the same Rank and Digni-  
ty; or of having some inferior and secon-  
dary Wife, or Wives, subordinate to a  
first and principal One. For, however  
these

these Things have been, and still are, tolerated, or allowed by the Policy of some Nations, and whatever may be said, in the Way of Speculation, for the Propriety of them to a certain Degree, in some extraordinary Cases, which may be put, yet, they have never been found to contribute to the general Good of any Country where they have been practised, or to the greater Happiness either of Men, or of Women, in the married State. On the contrary, it is apparent, that from the very Nature of the Things, they must be productive of many of the same Mischiefs and Inconveniences, which flow from Men's indulging themselves in the more loose and libertine Kind of Life; and that they must bring, at least upon Women, Evils more insupportable and oppressive, than any, to which they can be exposed by the ordinary Infidelity and Debauchery of their Husbands. Both Polygamy and Concubinage, therefore, must, in the general, be Offences against the Law of Nature; as they greatly obstruct both public and private Happiness, and give Rise to much Confusion and Misery, both in the larger,

SERM. ger, and more contracted Societies of  
XII. Mankind. Nor can they, upon any  
Foundation, be ever universally, or generally, tolerated in any Community, where the Principles of a true Policy, and of an equal Government, are known and understood. It remaineth, then, that the original Appointment, *of one with one*, notwithstanding all the Rail- lery, and Obloquy, which have been thrown out against it, be religiously adhered to, and kept up; as of all Schemes, it is the best calculated for the common Interest of the World, and for making the Marriage-State to answer most effectually the Ends of its Institution.

Another essential Article of the matrimonial League, consisteth in its being founded in Love, or the mutual Affection of the Parties who are engaged in it. This is the true Ground, and the Cement of the married Relation, the Thing which strengthneth and consolidateth it, the very Life and Spirit of the conjugal Society, which alone can insure its Continuance in Purity and Vigour, and prevent its degenerating into a State of dead Coldness and Indifferency.

If



If a *Love founded in Reason, loyal, just, and pure*, prevaileth reciprocally in the Hearts of a married Pair, it cannot but make them most intent upon pleasing one another, and chearfully to perform the Duties respectively incumbent on them, for promoting that End. It will make the Man very readily to give to his Wife, all that Protection and Support, and all that Respect and Honour, which are due to her; and to take upon himself the most laborious and burthensome Part in the Management of their common Concerns, in educating and providing for Children, and in the Government of the Family: It will make the Woman again, on her Part, to treat her Husband with all the Tokens of Esteem, Sympathy, Gratitude, and Confidence; to be very observant of him, and compliable with his Sentiments in any Cases of Importance, where he may interpose with his Advice; and to acquit herself in general, in her Department in the Family, with Prudence, Diligence, Frugality, and a decent Oeconomy. It will oblige both Parties to watch and guard strictly against the Beginnings

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Rom. xiii.  
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ginnings of all four, peevish, and petulant Humours in their Minds, which would threaten an Interruption of their Quiet, and might in their Progress be entirely destructive of their Happiness, and by Forbearance and Gentleness, and a mutual condescending and yielding at proper Times, to establish and perpetuate their Harmony and Peace. In a Word, the mutual Love of Husband and Wife, discreetly and uniformly exerted, will be a fulfilling of the whole matrimonial Law, as *St. Paul* telleth us, that *the Love of our Neighbour is a fulfilling of the whole moral Law, in regard to him.* Of so great Importance is an Union of Hearts, in the Persons connected in the married State; nay, of such absolute Necessity is it, that no Conjunctions of Men and Women, though made under all the Forms and Sanctions of Law, can, without it, be justly dignified with the Name of Marriages. And, therefore, all Matches, where mutual Affection doth not take Place, and much more, where there is no Room in Nature for the Exercise of it; as those, between a profligate young Man, and a decrepit, dis-

disagreeable old Woman, who can never be desired but for her Wealth, or some other worldly Advantage to be obtained by her; and on the other Side, between a gay, dissipated young Woman, and an old, decayed Dotard of a Man, in whom she can never find any Thing attractive of her Esteem and Regard, and to whose Desires she submits herself, only for lucrative, or some worse Considerations, must be utterly disapproved. All such Matches are so far from deserving the honourable Appellation of Marriages, which have something pure and delicate, and strictly moral in them, that they are but base and shameless Prostitutions, often more odious than some of the Prostitutions of Men, avowedly out of all the Bonds of Wedlock.

The last Condition of the matrimonial Union, is, that it is to be indissoluble, or to end only by Death. The Ends of the conjugal Relation, require that this should be a Law of it; as the right Education of Children, to which the intimate Society and joint Care of the Parents are necessary, may run out into a long Course of Time, to a Period, not

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to be determined by any positive Compact: And as the pure and tender Friendship, which is contracted in the Marriage State, is intended for Perpetuity, without which, it can never be thought to be sincere and genuine, and which, when once formed and established, cannot be broken, unless for some notable Misbehaviour on the one Side, or the other, without great Injustice and Disingenuity. There are, however, undoubtedly, several Reasons, for which the matrimonial Contract is to be dissolved; some, which shew it to have been void from the Beginning; such as a natural Incapacity of performing the Duties of the married State; the Minority of either of the Parties, or an Inability to give the proper Consent in such an important Affair as Marriage; a prior Contract, which hath been sufficiently notified; and some of the nearer Degrees of Consanguinity. And there are other Causes, which annul the Contract, after it hath been validly entered into; such as the Adultery of either Party; wilful Desertion, or an obstinate Refusal of Cohabitation; an implacable Hatred  
and

and Enmity, and such an habitual Brutality of Temper and Behaviour, as leaveth no Foundation for any friendly Intercourses for the future, and which even endangereth the Health, and threateneth the Life of both, or either of the Parties. All these are evidently just Causes of Divorce, according to the Principles of the Law of Nature; as they are inconsistent with the Nature, and destructive of the essential Conditions of the married State. But without these, or some other Reasons of Separation, fully equivalent to them, the matrimonial Union, whatever little Inconveniencies may be found to attend the Continuation of it, in particular Cases, is to be held sacred and indissoluble, and cannot, indeed, be broken for any light and trivial Causes, without much Damage to the Public, as well as a great deal of private Cruelty and Oppression.

Enough hath been now said, to shew wherein the Dignity, or Honour, which belongeth to the matrimonial State, consisteth. It must be a worthy and honourable State, as it contributeth so eminently to the Good of Society, by repre-



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nishing it, in a Way perfectly consistent with the Order of God's Creation, and in Pursuance of his Appointment, with new Members, as the old ones, through their unavoidable Destiny are cut off; and by furnishing and preparing proper Persons, for filling all the important Posts in Life, and for doing the Business of the several honest Callings and Professions of Men. It is justly thought to be a brave and praise-worthy Thing, to plan, and to set out a new Plantation for future Use and Ornament, and to take Care of its Growth and Thriving; or, to make a valuable and elegant Improvement of any Kind. But certainly, the noblest Work of a Man, is to rear up the Youth of his own Kind, and particularly those, who have a natural and necessary Dependance upon him, into Men, and to send them into the World, in such a good Plight both of Body and Mind, as will lay a Foundation for their being of some Consequence and Consideration in it, and will promise, that, instead of being the Plagues of the Places where they live, Burthens to the Earth, and Nuisances in Society, they will turn  
out



out agreeable Neighbours, Friends, and Relations, in private Life ; and that in regard of the Public, they will prove good Citizens, and faithful Subjects, who, in Proportion to their several Ranks and Situations, will honestly contribute their Part, to the Defence, Prosperity, and Honour of their Country. This is certainly, one of the most meritorious Atchievements, which a Man can have to boast of, and which must entitle him to a high Degree of the Respect and Favour of the Public ; and which may sometimes prove an honourable and lasting Memorial of him, after all his other Designs and Works have perished, and are quite forgotten. It is well known, that some of the wisest and greatest People, that ever were in the World, particularly the *Romans*, paid an high Respect and Honour to the married State, on Account of its Subserviency to public Utility, and to private Happiness ; and that they decreed extraordinary Privileges and Exemptions, some honorary, and others profitable and advantageous, to the Men who lived in it, in Proportion to the Number of Children, whom

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they had begotten, and brought up for the Service of the Public ; while they often imposed Fines, and other Inconveniencies, upon the Persons who declined the serving of their Country in this Way. This seemeth in general, to have been good Policy ; only the latter Part of it, was certainly carried too far in the *Roman* State, by the enacting of very severe Laws, for compelling all to enter into a married Life ; whereas the matrimonial Contract must be quite free and voluntary, in order to its answering any good End. Besides, it is certain, that Persons of both Sexes, may have very good Reasons to determine them to a single State, or to make them to spend their whole Life in a chaste Celibate ; as when they are engaged in any important Affairs of the Public, the Management of which, is inconsistent with their giving a just Attention to the private Concerns of a Family ; or, when they are employed in such necessary and extensive Services, to a large Kindred, or to a numerous Family already formed, and which Providence seems to have thrown particularly under their Care, as would  
render



render it imprudent to bring themselves under any more Obligations of the same Kind: Or, even when they can meet with no Opportunity of entering into the Marriage State, which would make their engaging in it, a rational and advisable Measure. The Situation and Circumstances of these Persons, lay a moral Impediment in the Way of their entering into the matrimonial Union: They are, therefore, very justly and honourably excused from it. But as for those who abstain from the married Life, without any Obstacle, either moral or natural, in the Way of their going into it; it may, perhaps, be hard to find any Excuse for their Conduct, or even to free it from great Blame. If they refuse to enter into the matrimonial Relation, merely from Indolence of Temper, or an Aversion to any Share of the Labour and Pains, which must necessarily attend the good Management of Family Concerns, the Part which they act, even in this View of it, is pusillanimous and dishonourable, unworthy of a Man, of a Member of Society, and of one who should be a Lover of his own Kind: Or,

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if their Neglect of Marriage, proceedeth from another Principle, which, it is to be feared, too often beareth Sway in them, a Desire to secure to themselves, a more free and ample Range in the Pursuit of licentious Pleasure, or to give themselves up more intirely to the Gratifications of a dissolute and promiscuous Lust, their Conduct then must be pronounced to be extremely criminal and immoral.

I shall conclude this Subject, by pointing out briefly, the Qualifications, which should be principally regarded by Men and Women, in the Choice which they make of a Partner in the matrimonial Society. This is plainly a Matter of the greatest Moment : For according as the Choice which they make is good, or bad, the State into which it introduceth, will, in all Probability, be either happy, or the contrary. Now, the first Qualification which is to be regarded, in an Associate in the Marriage State, is certainly a good Mind, a Mind endowed with a true Sense of Religion and Virtue : This, I say, is the prime Qualification to be considered in the Choice of an Husband,

or



or a Wife; as it is certain, that no Friendship contracted with a Person, who is quite without it, can ever be depended upon, for being thoroughly sincere, firm, and durable. Another Qualification to be regarded and valued in taking a Partner into the matrimonial Connection, is, a competent Share of natural Understanding; a Vein of clear good Sense, which will make Persons to judge truly, in all the common Cases, and ordinary Occurrences of Life; to discern readily all gross Errors and Absurdities in Practice, and to see the Proprieties and Decencies of Behaviour; and may enable them to conduct themselves accordingly; and which may lay a Foundation for further Acquisitions and Improvements in Knowledge, and thereby rendering them more agreeable Companions and Friends, and more entertaining and useful to all, with whom they have any Intercourse and Conversation. A third Pre-requisite, of great Importance, to any one's being wisely chosen a Husband, or a Wife, is, a sound Temper; calm and patient; meek and gentle; humble and condescending; fair and candid;

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candid ; chearful and easy ; which is not soon provoked or ruffled ; or which, if it should be liable to some sudden Starts of Passion, immediately recovereth its usual Tone, and doth not grow peevish and sullen, fretful and discontented, which, of all Dispositions of the human Mind, is perhaps the most disagreeable ; as it is plainly, the most constant Source of Vexation and Uneasiness, in every State of Life, and particularly in that of Marriage. After the Preference hath been given to the Qualifications, which have been mentioned, in chusing a Consort in the married Life, some Regard is to be had, in the next Place, to something of an agreeable Person ; and among those, who are of any Rank, to something of a genteel and liberal Education. These Things may, indeed, be easily over-rated, as the first of them, particularly, hath often been, to the ensnaring and misleading of many unthinking young Minds. But still, as a gainly outward Form, and an easy, natural, and polite Manner and Behaviour, have certainly a great Effect, in conciliating Good-will to those, who possess them ;

as the total Absence of these Qualities, and more especially, as the contrary Qualities, of an uncouth external Appearance, ill Breeding, and coarse Manners, hardly fail to create a Disgust and Aversion to the Persons, in whom they are found, or at least put a Bar to all Intimacy and Familiarity with them; every Man, who acteth prudently, will, in making Choice of a Partner and Companion, from whom he is not afterwards to be separated, pay some Attention to the Advantages of a pleasing outward Appearance, and of unconstrained agreeable Manners; while, at the same Time, he will cautiously avoid the laying an undue Stress upon them, or thinking that even the highest Degrees of them, can compensate the Want of more excellent and solid Qualifications.

These are the Qualities, which should chiefly recommend the Individuals of one Sex, to those of the other, when they chuse their Associates in the matrimonial Relation; all of them being so necessary to the Happiness of the married Life, that the total Absence of any one of them is not to be dispensed with.

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And as they are not all to be usually found in an high Degree, in any one Person, a wise Man will fix his Choice, where he may meet with them, with the fewest and smallest Imperfections and Deficiencies. Imperfections and Defects he must indeed lay his Account to find, in the best Endowments, and most amiable Qualities of Mankind, even of those, who stand in the nearest and most endearing Relations to him. And it will be very proper for those, who are entering into the married State, to carry along with them a just Sense of those unavoidable Imperfections, owing partly to the original Frailty of our Nature, and partly to the Defects of Education, for correcting the florid Imaginations, which may, perhaps, at first possess them, of nothing but a Scene of constant Serenity, Gaiety, and Pleasure in the matrimonial Society; and for preparing them for those little Disappointments and Ruffles, to which they will certainly, in Time, be exposed, even when they conduct themselves towards one another, in the main, with Prudence and Good-nature; and for making them to bear with one  
another's

another's Infirmities, and to continue to esteem and love each other, notwithstanding their Weaknesses, while Wisdom and Discretion, and Goodness of Mind and Heart, are, upon the Whole, prevalent in their Characters.

I have not, hitherto, mentioned the Advantages of a great Fortune, high Birth, and a grand Alliance, as Inducements to intermarry with the Persons, who are possessed of any of them, or by whom they may be all obtained. For, however these Things, according to the common Notions of Men, and the Custom of the World, bear down all other Considerations, in forming a matrimonial Alliance; yet, according to the Dictates of the plainest Sense and Reason, and that Order which Nature pointeth out to be observed by us, in the Conduct of this Affair, they are all to be postponed to the Qualifications, which have been already named, for recommending Men and Women to one another for Partners in the conjugal State. These Advantages being purely external, and not entering into the Nature of Man, can have no intrinsic Merit: And therefore



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fore to prefer them to, or even to put them upon a Level with the Things which have that Merit, such as intellectual and moral Endowments, must indicate a groveling and base Disposition. If indeed a Man, in Conjunction with as large a Portion of the truly excellent and more valuable Qualifications, as he could expect in any whom he might hope to marry, can obtain a large Accession of Fortune, and other Advantages, which will raise him to a more conspicuous and eminent Rank in Life, by the Person, with whom he enters into the married State, he may very wisely, and commendably desire, and accept of them. An affluent Fortune, however it may throw Temptations in the Way of inconsiderate weak Minds, which cannot be resisted by them, but with Difficulty; yet, may be most justly regarded and valued by a prudent and good Man, who knoweth how to improve it properly, both in the Way of private Oeconomy, and for serving the Purposes of good Neighbourhood, Generosity, and Benevolence, or any publicly useful Designs and Works. It is certain, that a  
com-

competent Share of Riches is altogether necessary, previously to any one's entering into the matrimonial State, and that no Man, who considereth what he is about, and who hath the Affections in him, which are requisite for a married Life, will ever think of going into it, without either being possessed of such a Stock of Wealth, as will support the Expences of any Family, which he may have, suitably to his Rank in the World, or at least, without being in a Way of acquiring such a Stock of it, by the Blessing of God upon his honest Industry. And if he hath an Opportunity of arriving at the more eminent Degrees of Fortune and Station, let him make Use of it, and improve it wisely ; and it may be better for himself, his Family, and all with whom he hath any Connections. But if after a Man is in Possession of such a Fortune, as is fully sufficient for answering all the reasonable Purposes of a Family, he is still so fond of augmenting it, by the Disposal of himself in Marriage, as for the Sake of that, to sacrifice any Part of the more valuable Qualifications, which should recommend a  
Partner

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Partner to him in the married State, he certainly acts a Part, very unbecoming, and unworthy of him : Indeed, the giving up the least Measure of inward Worth in this Affair, for the highest Degrees of outward Advantages, is altogether inexcusable. But how unpardonable, then, must the Conduct of those Persons be, who lay no Strefs at all upon the Qualifications, which alone, can rationally and justly recommend a conjugal Associate to them ; who, if they can but gratify their Passions of Avarice and Ambition, unite themselves to Pride and Vanity ; to Insipidity, Ignorance, and Folly ; to Peevishness, Moroseness, and Ill-nature ; to Vices the most gross and palpable ; often to Diseases and Deformity ; who, in short, take into a Confortship with them, in the most venerable, important, and durable Relation in Life, a Person, whom no Man, of any Taste and Delicacy, would chuse, if he did not think himself obliged to it, in Point of Complaisance, or good Manners, to converse with for half an Hour ! What a horrid Prostitution of Character, what a vile Corruption of Heart, what a total

total Alienation from all that is worthy, manly, and honourable in human Life, doth this Practice discover? And what are the Fruits and Effects of the Unions formed between Men and Women upon this Plan? You need to look but a little abroad, to be informed. The little Fondness, which perhaps at first subsisted between the Pair, thus brought together, soon abateth, and is succeeded by Indifference and Coldness, a Dislike and Contempt of one another. From hence proceedeth a Loathing of their common Bed, a Renunciation of their matrimonial Engagements, Adultery probably on both Sides, with all that fatal Train of Evils and Mischiefs, which must necessarily be the Attendants on such Infidelity and Licentiousness.

The other Point proposed to our Consideration in the Text, shall be the Subject of another Discourse.

and Attention from all who are  
interested in the subject of  
the Bible.

It is the duty of every  
man to be a law-abiding  
citizen, and to be a  
law-abiding citizen is to be  
a law-abiding citizen of the  
Kingdom of God.

It is the duty of every  
man to be a law-abiding  
citizen, and to be a  
law-abiding citizen is to be  
a law-abiding citizen of the  
Kingdom of God.

It is the duty of every  
man to be a law-abiding  
citizen, and to be a  
law-abiding citizen is to be  
a law-abiding citizen of the  
Kingdom of God.



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## S E R M O N XIII.

The Evil and Danger of Whoredom and Adultery.

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H E B R E W S XIII. 4.

*Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled ; but Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.*

I SHALL proceed now, to consider SERM.  
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the second Assertion, or Proposition laid down by the Apostle in the Text, concerning the Evil and Danger of Whoredom and Adultery. *But Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.*

*Whoredom* is a general Word, comprehending all unlawful Commixtures of the two Sexes, all the Impurities and Debaucheries which are practised by them, of which Adultery is a remark-

SERM. able Branch. It is not necessary to enter into a particular Explanation of these  
 XIII. Vices: It is to be wished, that they were not at all known, or spoken of among Christians. The Nature of them will be well enough understood, in pointing out the Evil, or Immorality of them, and in shewing their malignant and fatal Tendencies.

Now, the Evil of these Practices, in general, will appear, first, from considering, that they subvert, or break in upon that wise and good Order, which God intended should take Place in his Creation, for propagating and educating the human Race. The fine Machinery established in Nature, for bringing the Sexes into the matrimonial Union, in order to the Procreation and Education of Children, was taken Notice of in the former Discourse. But now, all this is counteracted and defeated, when Persons indulge themselves, in the Gratification of vagrant Desires and Lusts, which divert them from all Thoughts of an honourable Marriage, and which, often in Time, render them incapable of performing the Duties of that State. But this  
 is

is not, perhaps, the worst of the Case: For there being, as was likewise observed in the former Discourse, something so peculiar in the Case of the human Offspring, above what is to be found in the Case of the Offspring of any other living Creatures in this World, as to require a long, assiduous, and laborious Attendance for the Rearing of it, and the putting it properly into the World: And as for effecting these Purposes, the joint Care and Endeavours of both Parents must be employed, which yet are never to be expected in a sufficient Degree, but where the Parents are joined in a firm and indissoluble League of Love and Friendship, uniting them to one another, and to their common Children; it is plain, that the promiscuous Debaucheries of Men, which are inconsistent with such a League and Union, break in upon the venerable Constitution of Nature, and are a certain Obstruction to the right Education of the unfortunate Children, who are born from them, which yet is of greater Consequence, than the mere bringing of them into the World, can be supposed to be. Ac-

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cordingly, Experience sufficiently assures us ; that the spurious Offspring of Men, are commonly extremely neglected, that, in many Instances, they are totally deserted, and left, as of an uncertain Birth, upon the Public ; and that, in other Cases, where some little Care may be taken of them, by one, or both of the Parents, yet it is so very slight and ineffectual, that it layeth no Foundation for their being of any Importance, either to themselves, or to the World ; but leaveth them in the utmost Danger, both of ruining all their own most valuable Interests, and of being injurious and hurtful to Society. Some Exceptions, however, must here be undoubtedly made in Favour of some Men, who, though they may have allowed themselves to bring Children into the World, in a disorderly and licentious Way, yet have still retained so much Sense of the Obligations which they were under, to take a proper Care of such illegitimate Issue, as hath induced them to give to them, some decent Education, to provide for their Subsistence, and to settle them in an useful Way in Life : Which

is certainly a commendable Thing in them, and, perhaps, the best Reparation which they can make for the Irregularity of their Conduct, in the Begetting of them. But this is far from being the general Practice of those, who indulge themselves in a dissolute and libertine Course; very few of whom ever think of taking the least Care of the poor Creatures, whom they are the Instruments of bringing into Life; but who, for the most Part, leave the whole Burthen of them, upon the unhappy Partners of their Guilt, who soon finding that they are overloaded with it, and being themselves corrupted, either expose their unhappy Offspring to immediate Destruction, or abandon them so intirely, that in Consequence of it, they plunge, almost as soon as they are capable of it, into all Sorts of Vice and Depravity, and into the greatest Infamy and Misery. Now, as the Whoredoms of Men, are such manifest Infringements of the Laws of the Creation; as they produce great Confusion, Destruction, and Misery, where God intended there should be nothing but Order, Peace, and Joy, must



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they not be deemed by all Men of Reflection, to be very flagrant and daring Offences? Will any one pretend to say, that a Man, for the Sake of a low Gratification, which yet might be enjoyed by him, at least to as much Advantage, in an innocent and honourable Way, may trample upon the Appointments of sovereign Wisdom and Goodness, and break through the Constitutions of the supreme Governor and Lord of all, without incurring an high Degree of Guilt, or running into a most gross Immorality?

But the Evil of the Debaucheries, or Whoredoms of Men, will further appear in general, from the Tendency of them, to enervate, corrupt, and enslave the Mind. This, it is certain, is the Tendency of Vice in general, there being no Species of it, which, if a Man indulgeth himself in it, will not soon breed great Disorder in his Mind, enfeeble its superior Powers, and corrupt its Affections; but there is, perhaps, no Sort of Vice, which bringeth greater Desolation into the Soul, and more effectually hurteth and destroyeth it, than a Habit of gross  
De-

Debauchery, and a Course of unbounded licentious Pleasure. The first Steps which a Man taketh in this Course, shock the whole Frame of his Mind, and farther Advances quite unhinge it, and throw it into a State of the utmost Confusion and Depravation, impairing and degrading its commanding Faculties, and giving an undue Strength and Influence to its lowest Appetites and Desires; diverting it from all those noble and divine Employments, which are suited to the Dignity of a spiritual and rational Nature, and rendering it, indeed, impotent to, and quite averse from them; extinguishing every generous Sentiment and Principle in it, filling it only with gross Conceptions, and throwing a Tincture of Sensuality over the whole Complexion of it, inuring it chiefly to unmanly and brutal Gratifications, and making it to relish nothing so much as the meanest and lowest Pleasures and Enjoyments; besides depriving the Man of the Liberty of acting according to his own Judgment, and subjecting him, most servilely and ignominiously, to the capricious and insolent Passions of the weak,

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Pec. ii. 11.

Hof. iv.  
11.Luke xv.  
24.2 Tim. v.  
6.

weak, imperious, and worthless Object of his misguided Love. So justly hath St. *Peter* observed, that *fleshly Lusts war against the Soul*; and the Prophet, that *Whoredom and Wine take away the Heart*: The Truth of which, our Saviour hath exemplified to us, in a very lively Manner, in the Parable of the Prodigal, who by running into a Familiarity with Harlots, and other Acts of a libertine Life, soon lost both the Understanding and Heart of a Man, and brought himself into the most contemptible and deplorable State, in which a human Creature can be supposed to be. And therefore, our Lord represented him, while in this Condition, as *dead*, as indeed he was to all the Purposes of a rational and virtuous Life, and described his Recovery from it, under the Notion of a spiritual Resurrection: *He was dead, and is alive; He was lost, and is found*. Agreeably to which, St. *Paul* declareth of the Woman, *who liveth in Pleasure, that she is dead, while she liveth*. There are indeed Degrees in this Degeneracy and Corruption of the Soul, which a libertine Course produceth; and if the Persons, who  
have

have unhappily entered upon it, would be persuaded to stop, and to retreat in Time, they would, probably, soon recover a sound State of Mind. But when they obstinately persist in their Course, and plunge deeper into all Extravagance and Debauchery, their Conduct must as certainly be attended with the Oppression of their higher Powers, the Extinction of their more amiable Affections, the Loss of worthy Sentiments, and a wretched Lowness and Baseness of Mind, as any malignant incurable Distemper in the Blood, must be followed with the Weakness and Pain, with the Languishing and Death of the Body. As therefore, the Debaucheries of Men, make so dismal a Havock of the Mind; as they, always, at long run, necessarily destroy what is most properly the Man in us, they must, certainly, be Crimes of the most complicated Malignity, which no Man can allow himself in consistently with any Claim to a worthy Character, or indeed without being thought to be quite profligate and abandoned.

The great Evil, or Immorality of the Debaucheries of Men, will still more fully

SERM. fully appear, in the next Place, from the  
XIII. Consideration of the Injustice which is  
implied in them. It is impossible to  
Men, to indulge themselves in any of  
the various Kinds of Lewdness, without  
trampling upon some of the most sacred  
and important Rights of their Neigh-  
bours, and doing them a flagrant Injury.  
This is most notoriously the Case, when  
Adultery is committed. If any of the  
Rights of Mankind, are to be deemed  
inviolable, those of Marriage undoubt-  
edly are; as the Preservation of them is  
of the greatest Consequence, indeed is  
absolutely necessary to the Happiness of  
every married Pair, to the Welfare of  
their Families, to the Satisfaction of  
their Relations, and even to the Order  
and Tranquility of Society. A Viola-  
tion, therefore, of the Faith, which  
hath been solemnly given, and vowed in  
Wedlock, which totally destroyeth some,  
and greatly prejudiceth the rest of those  
most valuable Interests of particular Per-  
sons, and of the Public, must be ex-  
tremely wrongful and injurious. But it  
is not necessary, to use here any more  
Words upon this Point, as something  
was



was said in the former Discourse, for explaining and establishing it; and as the Injustice of Adultery, or *the Villainy* of it, as the Prophet *Jeremiah* calleth it, is so apparent in itself, that it hath been held in universal Detestation in all Nations, not only in the civilized Nations, but in those, which have been accounted rude and barbarous, and indeed among all Men of any Reflection and Sobriety of Mind. But suppose that a Man doth not proceed to such a Height of Injustice, for gratifying his impure Desires, as to invade the Bed of his Neighbour; suppose, that for this Purpose, he seduceth and debaucheth a Person, who is single and unmarried, yet the Injuriousness of his Conduct, must be often most gross and glaring. If the Person corrupted by him, was quite innocent before his Acquaintance with her, he is plainly guilty of a most cruel Injustice. For to what insupportable dreadful Evils, doth he expose the unhappy Victim of his Lust! To say nothing here of the Punishment which without an effectual Repentance, must await the Crimes, which he maketh her to commit, in another World; he

at

SERM. at once, cutteth off all her Prospect of  
XIII. Happinefs, and even involveth her in  
the most dismal Distrefs and Ruin in this  
World. For from the Moment of lofing  
her Character for Chafity, ſhe muſt  
ceafe to be an Object of Eſteem and Con-  
fidence, with all Men of the leaſt Spirit,  
or Delicacy ; will be caſt off, and avoid-  
ed by thoſe of her own Sex, who have  
any Regard to the Dignity and Decency  
of their Characters ; muſt indeed become  
the Scorn and Averſion of the World ;  
perhaps, after ſome Time, of the Man  
himſelf, who hath been the Author of  
her Miſery ; while in the mean Time,  
or as long as any good Principles are  
ſtirring in her, ſhe is conſuming with  
inward Anguiſh, Remorſe, and Dejec-  
tion, which may indeed, as ſhe groweth  
more desperate and abandoned, wear off,  
and be ſucceeded with what is infinitely  
worſe, an Inſenſibility of all Honour, or  
Shame of a right, or a wrong Conduct ;  
in Conſequence of which, ſhe will pre-  
cipitate herſelf more deeply into Guilt  
and Infamy, will turn openly impudent  
and lewd, become a Proſtitute by Pro-  
feſſion, and after a ſhort Life, extreme-  
ly

ly wretched in that State, will probably bring herself to a loathsome and untimely End. As these are the known, and almost unavoidable Consequences of seducing and debauching an unthinking and unexperienced young Woman; who, that is not lost to all Sense of Justice and Honour, who indeed but a thorough Villain, will, for the Sake of a very low Gratification, venture on a Practice, which threateneth such a terrible Destruction to an innocent Fellow-Creature?

The Injustice of this Conduct, is still greatly aggravated, if the Person, who is corrupted by a Man, hath been born to any considerable Advantages, or is of any Rank and Distinction in Life. To a Woman, indeed, in the very lowest Condition of Life, a great Injury is undoubtedly done, when she is defiled and robbed of all honest Fame; which must exclude her from all Hope of a comfortable and decent Support in the World, expose her to all Sorts of Indignities and Contempts, and perhaps in the End, overwhelm her with a Train of intolerable Suffering and Misery.

But

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But still if the Person debauched, be of a superior Rank, the Injury done to her, is plainly more flagrant and grievous, as the Wound occasioned by dishonouring her, must be most severely felt, and as she must, in any calm Hours, reflect with the bitterest Anguish, and the most dismal Agonies, on the advantageous and hopeful State from which she hath fallen. Besides, in computing the Injustice of this Sort of Debauchery, the Pains and Distresses given to her Family and Relations, must be brought into the Account; all of whom, will be more or less, and some of them will, probably, be most deeply affected, with the Consequences of her Disgrace.

Nor can a Man screen himself from the Imputation of Injustice, in following this licentious Course, by the Excuses which he commonly offereth for himself. As first, that the Party concerned was consenting, and as ready to comply with him, as he was to ask her. A Rape committed, or Force used in such a Case, he may, perhaps, tell you, would be unjust; but Consent being obtained, and the Person quite willing, according to  
the

the old Maxim, no Injury can be done to her. But now, if we may suppose, that she was perfectly innocent, before the Man began to solicit her, it is hardly credible, that she should so suddenly and intirely, throw off all Sense of Modesty and Shame, as to yield to his Desires, without any Hesitation and Reluctance. Without all Question, the Compliances of unthinking, unhappy Females in these Cases, are at first, for the most Part, the Effect of wicked Art, Falshood, and Deceit in Men, intent upon ensnaring and ruining them; and then the Consent which the Man obtaineth, is of a Piece with the Consent, which a Veteran in Iniquity, obtaineth from an inconsiderate and unexperienced young Man, to take away a large Part of his Estate, which by cajoling and wheedling, and much artful Insinuation, he hath been prevailed on to convey to him. Or if the Case should be, even as the Man urgeth in his own Defence, that the Woman, upon being asked, is at once willing to gratify his Desires; yet, surely, it may be expected, that a Man of any Reflection and Ingenuity of



SERM. Mind, would consider, whether she is  
 XIII. at Liberty to do as she pleaseth in this  
 ~~~~~ Matter? Whether her Chastity be not  
 an unalienable Right of her Nature,
 which, upon no Consideration, is to be
 parted with, or given up? Whether the
 native Modesty of her Mind, and the
 Honour resulting to her, from a pure
 and decent Conduct, be not Privileges
 granted to her by God, which are not to
 be prostituted, or thrown away, but
 which are to be most sacredly and invio-
 lably preserved for the constant Use and
 Ornament of her Life? And consequent-
 ly, whether a Man can, without a most
 manifest Injustice, take them from her,
 let her be ever so willing to relinquish
 and surrender them? Scarcely would any
 one think, that he could justly take her
 Life from her, even if she desired him
 to take it, and though her Death might
 possibly tend to his Profit, or Advantage;
 because, her Life is not a Thing, over
 which she hath a Dominion, nor which
 she hath a Right to dispose of as she
 pleaseth. To this, the Case of giving
 away her Chastity and Honour, seemeth
 to be exactly parallel.

Nor

Nor can a Man defend himself against a Charge of Injustice, in debauching an innocent Woman, by pretending that he will sufficiently repair any Injury, which he can be supposed to have done her, by providing amply for her Support, or settling her, perhaps, more easily and comfortably, than she would ever have been otherwise settled in the World. For let a Man do in this Case, whatever a generous humane Heart, touched with Remorse, for the Injury which he knoweth he hath done, can prompt him to, which is making as favourable a Supposition for him, as can be made; yet, it may be truly said, that nothing of this Sort, can be ever a sufficient Compensation for the Loss, which the Woman sustaineth by him. The Riches of the Mind, which are the Foundation of the Perfection and Happiness of our Nature, are not to be bartered or exchanged, for any of the Riches of this World. Innocence and Purity of Heart, a native Modesty and Ingenuity of Mind, fair Honour, and an unspotted good Name, with the consequent Esteem and Confidence of Mankind, are such goodly Possessions,

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Pfal. cxix.

v. 72.

1 Tim. v.
6.

sessions, so entirely disparate in their Nature, and so infinitely superior in their Value, *to Thousands of Gold and Silver*, that these are never to be laid in the Balance with them; and well may any Woman, even in the lowest State of Life, who hath happily got some Share of that Sense and Spirit, which become the Dignity of her Nature, say with Indignation to the Man, who offereth to bribe her out of her Innocence and Honour, *thy Money perish with thee*; forasmuch as thou thinkest, that the most divine Gifts of God, some of the highest Excellencies and Ornaments, with which he hath endowed the human Mind, are to be sold, for what may in Comparifon of them, be most justly called the Trash of this World.

But, perhaps, a Man may think of vindicating himself from a Charge of Injustice, in cohabiting with an unmarried Woman, upon a somewhat more specious Foundation; by saying, that from the Beginning of his Commerce with her, he hath been always true and faithful to her, that he intended from the first to be so, and that so he resolveth
to

to continue, and to live in all Respects with her, as a Husband with a Wife, excepting only his not chusing to go through the Ceremony of a formal Marriage. Now, it is certain, that according to the Principles of the Law of Nature, a Man, and a Woman, may unite themselves to one another, and live together as Husband and Wife, without any other Formality, than mutual Consent, and such an Assurance of constant Fidelity, and of adhering inviolably to all the Laws of the matrimonial State, as may be fairly depended upon. It would be easy to point out some Cases, in which they could not marry in any other Way. And in all Cases of this Sort, their Conduct must be free from all Imputation both of Immorality and Indiscretion. But as the Policy of almost all Nations, hath for very good Reasons, required, that the matrimonial Union should be entered into, by some public Acts and Forms, without which, no Marriages, at least in most Cases, can be deemed valid, it seemeth to be quite unaccountable, that any Man, who cohabiteth with a Woman, and whom he

SERM. professeth to esteem and love as a Wife,
XIII. should neglect, or refuse, when it is in
his Power, to obtain the Sanction of
Law, for their Cohabitation; as the
Want of that plainly injures, in some
Measure, both his own Reputation and
her's, and diminisheth the Credit and
Estimation, in which their Children, if
they have any, would be otherwise held
in the World. But the Truth is, that
notwithstanding any Professions of Fide-
lity and Constancy, which a Man may
think fit to make in this Affair, his re-
fusing to enter into the legal nuptial
Bond, may not unfairly be suspected, as
designed for reserving to himself an Op-
portunity of breaking his present Con-
nection, or Engagement, whenever a
new Passion, or some interested Views,
may incline and determine him to go
another Way; which would certainly be
such an Act of Perfidy, as could not but
be considered, to be full of the most
gross and base Injustice.

Nor, in the last Place, can a Man,
who indulgeth himself in Debauchery,
vindicate his Conduct from a Charge of
Wrong and Injustice, by alledging, that
he

he confineth himself to those, who have lost their Innocence, who have been long ago corrupted, and are become as debased and profligate, as they can ever be supposed to be. To say nothing of the low Taste, or rather of the total Want of all Taste and Delicacy, which the Man discovereth, who can join himself in such an intimate Union with common Harlots, which *St. Paul* representeth as an heinous Indignity and Trespass committed against his own Body ; he is plainly injurious to the wretched Creatures, with whom he liveth in such Familiarity. With the Loss of their Innocence, he is not indeed chargeable ; but of the Guilt of confirming, and settling them in their evil Courses, he must bear some Share ; as the longer they continue in them, they must necessarily become more hardened and incorrigible. He will probably reply, that they are already as bad as they can be made, and are quite irreclaimable. The first of these Assertions is, certainly, not true ; there being a continual Progression in Vice, as well as there is in Virtue, from lower to higher Degrees : so that a Person,

1 Cor. vi.

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son, who is now greatly corrupted, will, by Perseverance, and farther Practice in Wickedness, become still more degenerate and odious. And as to the other Point, that Women, who have become common Prostitutes, are not to be reclaimed; it must indeed be acknowledged, that considering the almost total Extinction of all good Principles, which so high a Degree of Prostitution presupposeth in them, it will be extremely difficult to make any good Impression on their Minds, and that the greatest Part of them, perhaps, are not to be reformed by any human Means. But, as our Saviour spoke of some of the Harlots of his Time, as being in some Sort prepared *for entering into the Kingdom of God*, so it may be hoped, that some unhappy Creatures of the same Character in our Days, may still have some of the good Principles, originally planted in their Nature, so much awake in them, as may lay a Foundation for their Recovery and Reformation. Nay, of the actual Reformation of several of them, there have been, and still are, some undeniable Proofs and Examples. And, if there be
but

but even a Possibility of their Conversion, it must, surely, be a melancholy Thought to a Man, who reflecteth upon his own Conduct, and hath any good Principles moving within him, that he may, partly, have been the Means of obstructing and hindering the Repentance and Salvation of some of these wretched Mortals ; that instead of availing himself of the Opportunities, which any Acquaintance which he had with them, afforded, for endeavouring *to convert them from the Error of their Ways, and to save their Souls from Death*, he hath rather precipitated them, with greater Violence, into Guilt and Destruction. And besides the Injustice, which a Man doth to those unhappy Prostitutes themselves, by indulging his lewd Inclinations with them, he likewise thereby disserveth and injureth the Public ; as he cherisheth and encourageth so many Pests of Society, in which they do unspeakable Mischief ; and as he layeth a Foundation for drawing in many other unthinking Creatures, into the same State of Vice and Infamy, by the Influence of their Example, and the Consideration of the Countenance
and

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JAMES V.
20.

SERM. and Support, which they meet with in
XIII. the World.



I hope, that enough hath been said, to convince you of the gross Immorality of the Debaucheries of Men, in all the common and ordinary Instances of them. I have purposely omitted to speak of their indulging themselves in any unnatural Lusts; as these are quite abominable and shocking, and, indeed, not fit to be named. And as these several Acts of Whoredom, are very bad in themselves, so the Ways and Means, which often lead to them, are proportionably evil and wicked: Such as all Immodesty of Dress and Behaviour; all Lewdness of Speech, and Obscenity of Conversation; all Intemperance in Eating and Drinking; an idle and relaxed Manner of Life; and more especially the keeping of Houses of Entertainment, to serve the Purposes of Debauchery, with all the infamous Trade of procuring and pimping; and above all, the execrable Practice of some Parents, in sacrificing the Virtue and Honour of their Children, for the Sake of some paltry Settlement, or some other low Consideration.

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The fatal Tendency, and dangerous Consequences of these Vices, shall now be briefly laid before you. SERM.
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It is certain, that Vice of every Kind, in Proportion to its Heinousness and Malignity, is dangerous and ruinous. God hath so contrived and ordered Things, that the Wickedness of Men, in any gross Instances, shall always correct them, and prove, in a great Measure, its own Punishment. This is very evidently the Case, as to the Vices of Impurity and Debauchery, which naturally and unavoidably bring upon those, who are accustomed to them, the greatest Mischiefs and Inconveniencies, and prejudice and hurt every valuable Interest, which they have in this World; impairing and dissolving their Minds, weakening and shattering their Bodies, introducing noisome pestilential Distempers into them, which, when they have got any footing, make a most terrible Devastation, and are seldom so entirely removed, as not to leave Remains enough, to create very grievous Aches and Sufferings to them, for the Remainder of their Lives, and which often transmit an infirm and sickly Constitution

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Prov. vi.
32.

Prov. v 8,
9, 10, 11.

Prov. vi.
26, --- 33.

Prov. vii.
22, 23.

stitution to their innocent Posterity; besides wasting and dissipating their Fortunes; blasting their Characters, at least among wise and virtuous Men; and in Conclusion, cutting them off by a premature Fate, perhaps before they have lived out half their Days. The Truth of all which Facts, is confirmed by the Judgment and Authority of one, who had no small Experience in these Affairs; who telleth us, *that whoso committeth Adultery, lacketh Understanding, and destroyeth his own Soul; and that when a Man goeth into the House of a strange Woman, he will give his Honour to others, and his Years unto the Cruel; that Strangers shall be filled with his Wealth, and his Labours shall be in the House of the Stranger; and that he shall mourn at the last, when his Flesh and Body are consumed: That by Means of a whorish Woman, a Man is brought to a morsel of Bread; and that a Wound and Dishonour shall be got by her, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away. And that when any Man is enticed by a Harlot, he goeth after her, as an Ox to the Slaughter, and as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; or, according*

cording to another Translation of the original Words, *as a Roe, he trippeth into the Toils, till a Dart strike through his Liver, and as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.*

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And besides those evil and bitter Fruits, which naturally and directly grow out of a dissolute and debauched Course of Life, the Laws of civil Society make the Vices of Debauchery inconvenient and troublesome to those who practise them. By the Law of *Moses*, and by the Laws of other wise Nations, in former Times, the Punishment of Adultery was Death: The same is the Case in some Countries at this Day. By the Constitutions of the same Nations, great Damages were given, and the most opprobrious Marks of Infamy were publicly and indelibly set upon Persons, for the Injuries committed by them, in the lower Degrees of Whoredom. And though Offences of this Sort, are not at present so severely animadverted upon, by the Laws of most Countries, as they deserve to be, yet, no Man, can any where, be grossly and flagrantly guilty of them, with Impunity; without both incurring great

Loss

SERM. Loss in his Fortune, and falling under
XIII. much Dishonour and Contempt.



But what are all the Penalties inflicted upon the Lewdness and Debauchery of Men in this Life, in Comparison of that Punishment which, without the Intervention of a deep Repentance, they are to suffer for them, in that which is to come. The Apostle hath declared, with a particular Emphasis, in the Text, that *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge*; that is, that he will certainly condemn, and most severely punish them.

2 Pet. ii.
9, 10.

St. Peter hath told us, that *the Lord knoweth how to reserve the Unjust to the Day of Judgment, to be punished; but chiefly them, who walk after the Flesh, in the Lust of Uncleanness.* And St. John hath assured us, that *Whoremongers are to be excluded from the new Jerusalem, and to have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.*

Rev. xxi.
8.

Gal. v. 19,
20, 21.

And besides what St. Paul saith in the Text, he hath, in his other Epistles, more than once affirmed, that *neither Fornicators, nor Adulterers, can have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of God.* And
because

because there were prophane Persons in his Time, as well as there are in ours, who made light of these Sins; who alledged, that there was but little, or no Evil in them, and that God would not at all punish them, or but slightly, in another World; the Apostle thought fit, to lay in a particular Caution, against such a Conceit: *Let no Man, saith he, deceive you with vain Words; for because of these Things, cometh the Wrath of God, upon the Children of Disobedience: Be ye not, therefore, Partakers with them.* Nor need we be at all surprized, that the Gospel should threaten Men so severely, on Account of these Crimes; if we will but reflect on the malignant Nature of them, to interrupt the Order, and deface the Beauty of the rational and moral Creation, and to debase and destroy the Soul; with the great Injustice of them, both to Society, and to particular Persons. Surely, if it be *meet and right*, in the Governor of the World, to animadvert upon, and to punish any of the Offences of Men, it must be right in Him, to punish their Debaucheries, which, at least in many Instances, are as heinous
and

Eph. v. 5.
x. 6, 7.

SERM. and enormous, as any other of their
XIII. Crimes whatsoever are.



To draw now to a Conclusion: I hope, that none who have attended to what hath been said, will ever think lightly, or speak in the least favourably of the Sins of Lewdness and Whoredom; and that all of us will be so far from practising them, that we will not allow ourselves in the least Approach towards them. There is not, perhaps, a stronger Instance *of the Deceitfulness of Sin*, or more properly, of the Willingness of Men, to deceive themselves, in Cases where their favourite Lusts and Corruptions are interested, than the mild Judgment, which they entertain of the Vices of Debauchery, which pass with the greatest Part of Men at present, for very trivial and venial Offences, as mere Slips and Failings, which are never to be severely reprov'd, or rigidly condemn'd, but are rather to be only laugh'd at, or quite overlooked. There certainly was a Time, when these Vices were considered in another Light: In the Beginning of Christianity, they were drawn in the most odious Colours, and the Persons

sons addicted to them, were declared utterly incapable of *inheriting the Kingdom of Heaven*: Nay, St. Paul went so far, as to direct his Converts, that if any who was a Brother in the Christian Profession, turned out a Fornicator, *with such a One to keep no Company, and not to eat with him.* But these are now, in a great Measure, antiquated Notions. The People, particularly of our own enlightened and refined Age, have very generally discerned the Absurdity of such precise Doctrine, and have rid themselves of those Prejudices, which entangled St. Paul, and others of his Stamp, in the early Times of the Gospel; which Prejudices they see, could tend to nothing but to cramp the Vigour, and suppress the generous Ardour of the human Constitution, and are persuaded, that what is called Debauchery, or in their more polite, and fashionable Style, Gallantry, is so far from sully, or blemishing a Man's Character, that it is rather, in some Cases, at least, an Advantage and Ornament to it, and that instead of being a Reason, for excluding him from good Company, that it should rather re-

1 Cor. vi
11

SERM.

XIII.



commend him to the best : Accordingly, we find that the Practice of the World, is regulated very much upon this Plan ; the jovial gay Libertine, getting an easy Admission, into what is commonly accounted the most genteel Company, and particularly, into the Company of many of that Part of our Species, whose Conduct should be most exemplary in all Points of Decorum, Modesty, and Delicacy, and being better received in all Appearance by them, than the tame, low spirited Mortal, as he is usually thought to be, who is for setting up, forthwith, on a Scheme of strict Temperance and Sobriety. That to think, and act thus, is very much the Way of the World at present, cannot be doubted of by Men of any Observation and Experience. But seriously, is it not a lamentable Thing, that so gross an Infatuation, should so commonly prevail ? That so great Numbers of People, should be willing to be deceived in a Matter, which is plainly of great Moment ? That they do not, or will not see, because they will not open their Eyes, or exercise their discerning Faculties for that Purpose, the

the Evil and Malignity of Practices, which ruin and disgrace their Nature, and are destructive of all their most valuable Enjoyments? But this is a Case, in which we may say, as *St. Paul* said in another, *If any Man be ignorant, let him be ignorant*: The Effects of his affected, or wilful Ignorance, be to himself. I am willing, however, to hope better Things of you; that none of you, will attempt to justify, or to palliate Crimes, which will admit of no Excuse, and which will bear no Colouring; but that all of you, from a just Sense of the great Evil and Danger of the Vices of Debauchery, will hold them in Abhorrence; and that if any of you have heretofore, been unhappily entangled in them, you will resolutely refrain from indulging yourselves in them for the future; and that you will endeavour by Acts of Abstinence and Mortification, as you shall find them to be necessary, by avoiding Idleness, and all Sorts of Temptations, and, by the constant Exercise of serious humble Devotion, *to subdue the Flesh, with all its Affections and Lusts.* Thus shall we comply with the Will of God,

1 Cor. xiv,
38.

Gal. v. 24.

Thess. iv.
3, 4.

SERM. *God, even our Sanctification, which is that*
 XIII. *we abstain from Fornication, and that*
 ~~~~~ *every one of us should know how to possess*  
*his Vessel in Sanctification and in Honour.*

Rom. xii. *And thus shall we present our Bodies to*  
 1. *God, as living Sacrifices, holy, and accept-*  
*able, which is our reasonable Service.*

Jam. i. 27, *And practise pure and undefiled Religion,*  
*in an eminent Branch of it, by keeping*  
*ourselves unspotted from the Pollutions and*  
*Corruptions of this World.*



F I N I S.